March 2010

“What Matters Now: College Access and Success in the Age of Obama” was a powerful conference held by the USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice in Los Angeles from January 13-15, 2010. The event successfully provided nearly 150 enrollment professionals, scholars, and educational policymakers with a rich opportunity to dynamically and collectively discuss ways of remaking our system of education and presented a roadmap for results as the next decade unfolds. Attendees came away better informed, more engaged, and genuinely inspired by their individual and collective role in our effort to enhance student access and maximize success en route to a more prosperous nation.

This proceedings summary has been created from presentation outlines, scripts and notes to externally communicate the wealth of information that was generated and shared at the conference to an even larger cross-section of the professional community. We hope you will find this proceedings summary to be a valuable resource. Thank you for supporting the work of the center.

Most sincerely,

Jerome A. Lucido
Executive Director

Scott Andrew Schulz
Program Director
Max Nikias  
Provost  
University of Southern California

With tremendous energy and enthusiasm, Provost Max Nikias welcomed over 140 participants to “What Matters Now: College Access and Success in the Age of Obama,” a seminal event hosted by the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice at the University of Southern California. Provost Nikias highlighted education’s role as the “greatest equalizer of society” and charged the center’s conference with finding new ways to equip students to receive and benefit from a postsecondary education. More specifically, the conference was to serve as mechanism through which key representatives from government, academia and the nonprofit sector would have the opportunity to gather and discuss actionable methods for addressing today’s pressing policy questions: How best can aid increase access? Must colleges and universities go further to ensure that graduation rates and quality rise simultaneously? What more must we do to prepare our students for college success? By individually and collectively challenging ourselves to embrace new perspectives regarding these and other pertinent questions, we may focus on “long-ranging action” that will put the educational community in a more strategic position to meet the ambitious attainment goals set forth by the Obama administration. On behalf of the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice and the University of Southern California, thank you for your participation.
Jamie Merisotis
President
Lumina Foundation

As president of the Lumina Foundation for Education, one of the nation’s largest private funders of educational research and programming, Jamie Merisotis has been a strong advocate for enhancing educational attainment in the United States. His plenary address outlined current educational attainment rates, discussed why these attainment rates are unacceptable within the context of today’s evolving global economy, proposed new attainment goals, presented a detailed plan for meeting these goals, and challenged the critical mass of leaders in attendance to provide higher quality education for higher quality jobs as the next decade of the 21st century unfolds.

Where We Are

Nearly two years ago the Lumina Foundation for Education presented what we have called our “Big Goal.” The Big Goal calls for the United States to dramatically increase the number of students who earn high-quality college degrees and credentials to a best-in-the-world 60% by the year 2025. Right now, only about 40% of Americans between the ages of 25 and 34 have at least a two-year college degree. This level of attainment remains fairly constant across age groups; of older Americans – those ages 55 to 64 – approximately 40% also have a two-year degree. Essentially, we have done no better with the current generation than we did with their parents – in a span of nearly four decades. This has to change.

Why We Must Do Better

Although the 60% goal is audacious, it is also realistic and achievable. More than that, this goal is vital to the future of our country. Meeting the goal increasing the number of students who earn high-quality college degrees and credentials to 60% will keep the United States of America competitive in the global economy. 60% will ensure a solid middle class. 60% will meet our future needs.

For generations, the American economy created large numbers of jobs that did not require high levels of skills or knowledge but provided workers with the salary and benefits needed to live a middle-class life. As a consequence of global competition, these jobs are rapidly disappearing – and, in many cases, they are never coming back.

A study published by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York looked at job losses in all recessions between 1970 and the last one – six recessions in all. The study found that an increasing percentage of the job losses in each of the recessions were permanent. It used to be that, in a recession, factories and other employers would simply scale back and wait it out. Workers would be furloughed and then hired back as the economy improved. Now, and for the first time in history, most job loss is structural. In recessions like this one, companies are not going on hiatus – they are going out of business, and the jobs they provide are simply evaporating.
The current recession is also placing the relationship between education and employment in stark relief. Job loss has occurred at all education levels, but has been brutal for those less educated. Unemployment for high school dropouts has been near 20%, and it is not much better for high school graduates. Unemployment for baccalaureate degree holders on the other hand is around 5%; it has gone up, but not nearly at the same rate as for those with less education.

The evidence is clear that those with more education will have a far easier time finding new jobs. It may be tough for college graduates to find jobs today, but it is far, far worse for those without a college degree or credential. True low-skill jobs still exist in this country, but Americans who hold those jobs are not likely to enter or remain in the middle class. Without a college degree, there is a very good chance that these individuals will be poor, and with that comes the reality they are not likely to have access to quality health care, save for retirement or assure their children access to higher education. The consequences of failing to reach the middle class are increasingly severe. What has changed is that access to jobs with good pay and benefits is now mostly dependent on completing some form of postsecondary education.

The key to renewal of the American economy, both for short-term recovery and long-term transformation, lies in the development of a knowledge-based economy. This requires the higher education system to help Americans obtain the skills and knowledge called for in a globally competitive environment. Making this shift a reality should be the top priority at the state and federal level. There is ample evidence to show that the economy is already changing. We see this when visiting a doctor or when taking a car to a mechanic for repair. Technology is everywhere and being able to apply technology and data to a business’s specific needs is almost a requirement for the future.

Overall unemployment is around 10% nationally, and it’s worse here in California and in other states such as Michigan. Yet jobs do exist. It is just that they cannot be filled due to the lack of skills training and development. We need more people with high-quality degrees because that is where the jobs are, and it is certainly where the jobs are going to be.

Tony Carnevale, the noted labor economist at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, has estimated that, by 2018, 63% of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education or training. That is a huge increase since the mid-’70’s when less than 30% of jobs required anything beyond a high school education. Carnevale estimates that an associate degree will be the minimum requirement for at least 73 million jobs in this country by 2018.

When I joined Lumina in January 2008, a Big Goal of increased college completion was already being discussed. My contribution was to add two elements: the firm goal of 60% – making the target specific and workforce relevant – and the inclusion of two critical words: high quality. “High quality” has turned out to be a very important part of how Lumina is contributing to the important national dialogue about increasing college attainment. We do not want our nation’s colleges and universities to produce a spate of cheap degrees. This is about learning. This is about measuring learning. This is about workforce relevance – what students should know, understand and be able to do with their degrees. Not enough people are thinking about what students are learning and how they apply that learning when they get out of college. The idea of
high quality education puts us on firmer footing as opposed to merely trying to reach a particular threshold.

That being said, we have certainly experienced pushback from some in the field who say, “We don’t train students for jobs.” Ladies and gentlemen, of course we train people for jobs. True, that is not all we do. Higher education is certainly about teaching students to think and preparing them to take their place as citizens of the world. That is critical. But it is also about preparation for a lifetime of work, and often for a particular field.

We sometimes hear people say that the problems rest with the K-12 system, not higher education. We hear that the benefits of the college degree are declining, so our main emphasis should be on improving K-12 education. No, they are not. The need for a college degree is growing, by virtually any measure. Retooling our K-12 system is a vital and necessary part of our national education reform efforts but is no longer sufficient to meet our economic and social needs. A college degree is a prerequisite. There is no guarantee that a student who obtains a college degree is going to get a good job and have a middle-class life. But in the future, you almost will be poor without some kind of postsecondary credential. It has become cliché to say that a college graduate will earn a lot more money in a lifetime than a person who attains only a high school diploma. It may be a cliché, but it is true; since 1975, the average annual earnings of this nation’s high school graduates fell in real terms by 1%, while earnings among college graduates rose by 19%.

Having more college-educated people will bring societal benefits as well: higher rates of volunteerism, voting and philanthropic giving; decreased rates of crime and poverty; a reduced need for public assistance, including health care. These are benefits we all share when attainment rates rise.

How We Will Do Better

So how do we reach the Big Goal? How do we add 23 million college graduates to the population in 15 years? To achieve this, the nation must produce three critical outcomes by 2025. Being that we love acronyms in the world of higher education, I will introduce the following acronym to help you remember these critical outcomes: PSP.

PSP stands for Preparation, Success and Productivity. By preparation we mean that students are prepared academically, financially and socially for success in education beyond high school. Success means that higher education’s benefits and completion rates must be improved significantly. Productivity refers to increasing higher education’s capacity to serve more students. Clearly, these outcomes are significant. None of them can be reached in one step. So let us analyze each of the three critical outcomes individually and show what needs to happen in each area.

Preparation: Far too many students are unprepared for education beyond high school; this includes academic, financial and social preparation. All three of these areas must be addressed as co-equals. If they are not, research shows that the path to and through college becomes exceedingly difficult to navigate. We must take three immediate steps in order to achieve the goal of preparing our students for college success.
First, states and institutions must create and implement transparent higher education readiness standards aligned across K-12, adult learner and higher education systems. State standards for K-12 education, particularly high school graduation standards, should align with college readiness standards in the state. That is, they should ensure that students are prepared to succeed in and graduate from college, without the need for remedial or developmental education.

This also requires higher education to define clear and understandable expectations for college readiness and for schools, parents and students to have access to this information early in the student’s educational career. It is much easier to keep one’s eyes on the prize when they know how and where to find the prize.

In addition, every teacher, parent and student should know where each student stands in terms of admission to the range of public higher education institutions in the state based on their performance on the state standards for college readiness. Public higher education institutions in each state should develop and administer common assessments for admission and for placing students in development education courses, if needed. Standards for regular admission should be clear and unambiguous. They should be known and understood by students, parents and teachers well before graduation.

Second, state and community-based higher education outreach networks that support students in attending and graduating college should be expanded. This means increasing the number of college graduates among minority, first-generation and low-income students. Doing this is essential to increasing higher education attainment to the levels needed by the nation. States can and should support strategies to increase the success of underrepresented students. Every state should also create a strong college access network to ensure that this information and support is available to every young person by the eighth grade.

Third, federal, state and institutional policies and practice need to be in place so that no student is denied access to higher education because it is too expensive. States should evaluate the ways in which their public institutions provide financial aid to students, and provide clear incentives to public institutions to use both state and institutional aid to support the success of low-income students. State accountability systems should have consequences for those institutions that fail in this.

Lumina believes need-based financial aid should be increased significantly, and that information on college costs and aid should be readily available and transparent, particularly for first-generation students and their families. This includes dramatically simplifying the financial aid application process. As the federal government takes steps to simplify or eliminate the FAFSA form, as we learned more about last week, states should also make their aid programs as simple as possible for students to use.

In summary, to achieve these outcomes and thereby improve preparation, our priority strategies should be to:

1. Promote the alignment of standards and assessments used by K-12 and higher education systems.
2. Expand national postsecondary access, outreach and action campaigns. Lumina is currently engaged in such work through KnowHow2GO, a collaborative venture with the American Council on Education and the Ad Council that works to help young teens get an early start on the path to college success. KnowHow2GO features a national public awareness campaign designed to encourage students in grades eight to ten to take the necessary steps toward college. The campaign’s public service advertisements direct young people to a Web site that connects them to local networks of advocates, advisers and pre-college service providers.

3. Support the expansion of sustainable, high quality student service and advocacy networks.

4. Support research on innovative approaches to help low-income students prepare financially for college. Those FAFSA forms do not fill out themselves, and they can be daunting.

Success: As mentioned earlier, our goal at Lumina is not merely to push students through college but to help them achieve high quality credentials that will be useful to them in the 21st century workforce. So how do we secure success? Again, we have intermediate outcomes we need to reach on the way to achieving success. Perhaps the most important intermediate outcome is that higher education must use proven strategies to move students to completion of high quality degrees and credentials. At Lumina, we have funded dozens of programs that pursue this strategy, including some important work with minority-serving institutions, specific subpopulations and others. Achieving the Dream is one such example.

Achieving the Dream is focused on improving graduation rates among community college students – and with good reason. Community colleges educate 44% of the nation’s undergraduates and they are the institutions that serve the majority of students in underrepresented populations – the students whose graduation rates must improve most dramatically if we hope to reach the Big Goal. Achieving the Dream institutions use a data-driven approach to pinpoint and then attack gaps in student achievement. It is an approach that is working at more than 100 colleges in 22 states. This highlights another important point: Higher education should use quality data to improve student performance and inform policy and decision-making at all levels.

Right now, it is difficult to have a full understanding of how many students are succeeding or failing. Individual institutions keep track of how many students enroll, withdraw and graduate, but there is no feasible, systematic way to follow the progress of students as they transfer to other institutions, leave for other states or enter the workforce. This is a fundamental, systemic problem that a national effort called the Data Quality Campaign has taken on as its central mission. In addition, several important studies by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, which is participating in today’s discussion, focus intently on the feasibility of developing a linked system for student records data and have pointed the way to a much better way of collecting and analyzing data on real students – not the students who fit the neat parameters of a bygone era of limited mobility and flexibility.

Lastly, student learning outcomes must be defined, measured and aligned with workforce needs. To put it more plainly, we need to be teaching relevant courses and subject matter so students get the education they need to fill the jobs that employers have.
In summary, to achieve these goals and improve success rates we should:

1. Promote strategies that improve attainment of degrees and certificates, particularly by traditionally underrepresented students.
2. Implement stronger transfer and articulation systems that keep students moving toward completion of degrees and credentials.
3. Advocate for the use of quality data in higher education, through universal nationally linked student record data systems that follow students to the workforce, as well as data that facilitate the alignment of higher education and workforce.
4. Define and measure student learning outcomes and align them with workforce needs.

**Productivity:** If we’re going to have 23 million more college graduates in the next 15 years, our higher education systems and institutions must increase their productivity and capacity to meet the growing demand. In fact, they will have to develop alternative delivery systems.

Lumina is supporting this outcome by piloting new approaches to define, measure and increase effectiveness and productivity in higher education. We recently announced grants totaling as much as $9 million to support productivity initiatives in seven states. The idea is to support states’ efforts to deliver higher education in new ways and at lower expense to students and taxpayers. We will share learning from the pilot programs in these states – Arizona, Indiana, Maryland, Montana, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas – to help promising approaches be adopted more quickly. Right now, most state funding for higher education is based on input measures such as enrollment and salaries. These approaches should be changed to focus instead on performance, and thus increase the system’s productivity. State funding formulas and appropriations also should recognize the increased expense of serving students in groups not traditionally well served by higher education; such formulas should also provide incentives to schools that offer programs designed to meet workforce needs. Funding also should encourage institutions to increase their rates of degree completion and the sheer numbers of students receiving high quality degrees and credentials while maintaining or improving the quality of learning outcomes.

There is one additional point about our work in productivity that is worth noting. Even with all of the important investments we are making in this state-level work, and even with all of the other necessary and critical efforts we are making on the preparation and success fronts, we have an overarching sense that we cannot “reform” our way to 60%. We are also going to have to reframe and rethink by relentlessly focusing on the outcomes of higher education, making certain that we have the capacity to produce far more high quality graduates than ever before. This means we also will need to envision new and even more fundamental ways for higher education to do what it has always done: empower individuals and support our nation’s economic and social prosperity. In part, this means we will need to support the creation or expansion of alternative delivery systems for higher education that incorporate new technologies, competency-based approaches and other innovations.

For all of the reasons I have discussed this morning, I think you see why Lumina has embraced this Big Goal. It is clear that others have embraced it too, including the President of our country, who has pledged to make the United States the best-educated nation in the world by 2020.
We know the goal of dramatically increasing higher education attainment is audacious, but we believe meeting it is essential to the future economic, social and cultural well-being of the nation. Getting to that Big Goal will have huge payoffs – for the tens of millions of individual students who will be served both now and in the coming years, and most important of all, for the stronger, more secure nation that those citizens will build.
President Obama’s goal of once again making the United States the world leader in educational attainment by 2020 is clear; however, the means of achieving this goal is less certain. This panel discussed how the higher education community is responding to President Obama's initiatives, and addressed the federal role in advancing the nation's collective educational agenda.

**Zakiya Smith,**
Senior Policy Advisor
U.S. Department of Education

President Obama recognizes that the capacity for the United States to remain competitive in the world is dependent upon our willingness to create an educational system that prepares American citizens for the jobs of the new century. Although the state of the economy is dire, it has reminded us of how important it is to reform, retool, and recreate our workforce through educational investments. As such, President Obama has tasked Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, with the challenging yet enviable charge of uprooting and reshaping America’s educational system to meet the needs of the 21st century, so the nation not only leads the world in educational attainment but is prepared for the jobs of tomorrow. Only then will our workforce be less prone to periods of economic decline.

That being said, the president is firmly committed to dedicating more funding to the education sector. For instance, the Obama administration is providing more funding for K-12. However, this is anything but a free handout. Instead, in the spirit of competition, federal funds are being awarded to programs that promise to have the greatest impact on students and boost educational attainment. A great example of this can be found in the “Race to the Top” initiative that awards federal funding to innovative state programs designed to improve attainment and solve the achievement gap. In essence, the federal government is appropriating funds based on the capacity of various programs to improve student outcomes and, ultimately, better equip and prepare America’s future workforce.

Furthermore, the federal government is increasing financial aid options so that students aren't forced to defer their dreams. These measures include increases to Pell Grant values and an income-based repayment plan for students who pay back loans based on how much they make after graduating. Under this repayment system, most students would have their federal loans forgiven after 25 years, with forgiveness coming at 10 years for graduates who pursue work in non-profit fields. There are also changes to the Perkins Loan programs in the works, as well as efforts to more effectively support transfer students in their quest to complete baccalaureate degrees.

Indeed, the role of the federal government has become more pronounced because of the nation’s fiscal situation. We are faced with a reality which demands more highly qualified workers, both now and in the coming years. We must begin thinking about how to retool and retrain our workforce to be prepared for jobs of the future. President Obama has sought to improve access and attainment by investing in programs focused on student outcomes and by helping to remove financial barriers to postsecondary education.
Bryan Cook  
Director of Policy Analysis  
American Council on Education

As has been noted, President Obama has made higher education one of his priorities and has been willing to think outside of the box in order to enhance the nation’s educational system; as evidenced by the “Race to the Top” program. That said, his goal of making the United States the most educated country in the world by 2020, though bold on the surface and arguably necessary for the nation to remain competitive in the world economy, is somewhat problematic because it glosses over some significant underlying factors. For example, changing demographics and immigration trends in the United States create greater challenges, especially when compared to countries that have smaller populations and less immigration. Without addressing immigration policies, attaining the president’s attainment goals will be extremely difficult.

In addition, narrowly focusing the educational goal on reaching a specific number can adversely affect a more important focus on educational quality. Educational policies should not be solely about reaching numbers, but in advancing the nation’s preparation and capacity to compete economically. If it were only a matter of improving quantity, we could simply include educational certificates like other countries already do and boost our attainment rate three percentage points such that 43% of Americans would then hold a postsecondary credential. While this may be an option, we must not forget to focus foremost on improving educational quality.

When looking at federal attainment goals, it is also important to consider the context in which states are currently operating as well as consider the evolving role of the state. For instance, stimulus funds that were meant to supplement educational projects actually went toward supplanting the education budgets of most states. In other words, the majority of states cut their educational budgets and stimulus funds were simply used to maintain program offerings that were otherwise going to be eliminated, rather than enhance state educational programs. Moreover, states are attempting in many cases to dictate benchmarks rather than collaborate with institutions as they continue to withdraw state support for public institutions, creating a less collegial and cohesive environment that is conducive to a coordinated push toward meeting the president’s attainment goals. This lack of cohesiveness is further reinforced by the failure of states to provide incentives for private institutions to meet state goals. All told, there appear to be many challenges facing the president’s educational agenda.

Ed Elmendorf  
Vice President for Government Relations  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities

There is no question that we are seeing a reemergence of the federal government, watching as it takes an increasingly more active role in numerous policy areas such as healthcare and the financial sector. As the federal government becomes more involved in educational policy as well, it would be prudent to ask the extent to which the United States is behaving like a country with a ministry of education, and ask what this means as far as how educational policy is shaped and executed.
On the one hand, President Obama has made a point to set national educational goals. He would like the nation to meet a specific attainment threshold by 2020 in order to ensure the U.S. populace is educated and well-positioned to tackle the economic challenges of today and tomorrow. The federal government has also been deeply involved in postsecondary funding discussions, transforming the mechanism through which student loans are made available by moving toward a direct lending model. President Obama and Secretary Duncan have also repeatedly discussed national standards for schools, teacher assessments, and the like. As such, there is evidence of a top-down approach to education, an approach very similar to what one would find within a ministry of education.

On the other hand, we continue to enjoy the benefits of having a flexible system of education in the United States. Students can choose among institutions that vary tremendously by size, focus, geographic location, and public/private orientation. Institutions have multiple funding sources, many educational goals continue to be established and shaped at the state and institutional level, and rules are not set by mandates so much as they are through a “carrot and stick” approach; a great example of which is the Race to the Top initiative.

That said, there is no doubt the federal government has recently attempted to wield its power and influence educational policy to a significant extent. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities is very much concerned about how this trend may influence institutional behavior and adversely impact students. For instance, if the federal government continues to offer conditional postsecondary funding, institutions may be encouraged to turn their backs on serving underserved populations in favor of enrolling students who they know will be more apt to succeed with less academic and social support. Likewise, efforts to create a national set of academic standards are threatening to completely upend the nation’s capacity to offer diverse educational opportunities by standardizing admissions practices; a trend that could trade selective excellence for common mediocrity. We must ask what the repercussions are of mandating that high school exit standards translate into college entrance standards.

Thus far, public higher education institutions have been on the back end of the nation’s reform efforts. It is vital that this change if we are to collectively transform education in the United States. We must promote a more dynamic system of reform, one that is more centrally committed to enhancing preparation, success, and productivity.

Donald E. Heller
Senior Scientist and Professor of Education
Director, Center for the Study of Higher Education
The Pennsylvania State University

During the Bush administration the Spellings Commission made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the nation’s education system. The following quotes were drawn from the commission’s report:

1. “…expand higher education access and success by improving student preparation and persistence, addressing nonacademic barriers and providing significant increases in aid to low-income students.”
2. “...the entire student financial aid system be restructured and new incentives put in place to improve the measurement and management of costs and institutional productivity.”
3. “…change from a system based on reputation to one based on performance. We urge the creation of a robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education.”
4. “…embrace a culture of continuous innovation and quality improvement by developing new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning…”
5. “…development of a national strategy for lifelong learning that helps all citizens understand the importance of...higher education throughout their lives.”
6. “…increased federal investment in areas critical to our nation’s global competitiveness [STEM] and...attract the best and brightest minds from across the nation and around the world…”

How much progress have we made toward accomplishing these goals since the Spellings Commission published its report in 2006? Does it appear that we are on the right path to embracing the range of higher education improvements outlined by the commission? Let us examine each recommendation individually and assign a standard letter grade to each initiative based on its progress.

First, we have arguably made a number of strides to expand access. We have increased the value of Pell Grants from $4,731 last year to $5,350 this year and $5,550 next year. We have also linked increases in the maximum Pell Grant to the consumer price index. Finally, President Obama has made college attainment a substantial priority, setting a goal of making sure 60% of Americans have a postsecondary credential by 2020. Unfortunately, access continues to be disproportionate based upon race/ethnicity, income, and parental education. Overall, we have earned a grade of C-minus.

Next, how well have we restructured financial aid? There have most definitely been successes in this area in the last four years. For instance, we have made progress simplifying the aid process for students by streamlining the FAFSA form and making institutional aid forecasting easier to use and more readily available for students. Congress has voted to eliminate the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) and moved toward Direct Lending for all higher education institutions. Last but not least, there is a strong push toward focusing campus-based aid on completion and institutional need. As one might expect, however, there is more work to be done. I would argue we have earned a grade of B-minus in this category.

The second part of this initiative focuses on improving the management of costs and increasing productivity. This is one area where crisis has visibly resulted in collective. The “Great Recession” currently decimating the nation’s economy has forced everyone to become more cost conscious and learn how to do more with less. Concurrently, the federal government has responded swiftly to today’s economic downturn by providing stimulus funding for the education sector. All told, we have earned a very solid A-minus in this area.

The next category has to do with accountability and transparency. Admittedly, there has been a lot of talk about ways of improving student data systems at state and federal levels, and of making accreditation and assessment processes more open and digestible. The reality, however,
is that very little substantive changes have been made and very little data exists to suggest otherwise, earning us an “incomplete” for our efforts.

The Spellings Commission charged us with continuous innovation and quality improvement. We have failed miserably toward these ends. The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) has been largely burdened by earmarks, and we have done little to expand the sharing of curricula and improve distance learning opportunities to any great extent. Consequently, we have earned a disappointing grade of D in this regard.

Lifelong learning is arguably key to moving the nation forward in a more competitive world economy. Many adults need to be retrained for 21st century jobs. President Obama has made community college a central focus of his education agenda, a move to be applauded considering 42% of all undergraduate students are enrolled in community colleges. Though we must do a better job of ensuring community colleges are funded appropriately and are effectively partnered with businesses and four-year institutions to help maximize the effectiveness of job training and educational attainment, we are certainly headed in the right direction. This has earned us a grade of B.

The final category is global competitiveness. Thus far, the results are promising. President Obama’s 2020 attainment goal, and the Educate to Innovate and Race to the Top programs that invest federal dollars in building more effective, more data-driven, and more transparent education systems to enhance college attainment in the United States appear to be placing us on a path toward success. However, because this is a long-term goal, we most certainly cannot pat ourselves on the back just yet and have thus earned an “incomplete” for now.

If we add up all of our grades, we find that we have earned a C-plus overall; not terrible, but not great either. If this were a graduate level course, we would have to retake the course. As such, it seems pertinent for institutions to look at the report released by the Spellings Commission and discuss ways for accomplishing the initiatives outlined therein.
To effectively analyze college access and success in the age of Obama we must frame the current national agenda for higher education by examining the global landscape we expect to see emerge over the coming decades. We can better understand the current pressures facing higher education if we view today’s educational and economic circumstances through a rear view mirror.

**New Competitors**

As we think about America’s future, and higher education’s role in forging that future, it is appropriate to begin by examining the growing power of the world’s two most populous nations, China and India. These countries dwarf the U.S. in size, with populations of 1.1 billion in India, and 1.3 billion in China, compared to 300 million people in the United States. The combined population of “Chindia” is eight times that of the U.S. While China and India still have a long way to go, their rate of economic growth has been astounding, transforming the global economic landscape. China is the world’s third largest economy with a GDP equivalent to more than $4.3 trillion in 2008, trailing Japan (GDP: $4.9 trillion) and the U.S. ($14.2 trillion). Before the middle of this century, China is expected to have the world’s largest economy, followed by the United States and India.

India’s economic output is still much lower than ours, but its rate of growth up until the economic downturn was dramatic, peaking at 8.5% in 2006 and 2007. To put this in context, we should compare India’s economic growth rate to the U.S. economic growth rate of 2% in 2007.

**A New Economic Landscape**

Fueled by these emerging economic superpowers, the global economic landscape is being transformed. Economists agree that an age of “convergence” is nearing: per capita incomes of poorer countries are catching up with the richer countries. By the middle of this century, our share of the world economic product will be less than today’s share for the poorest, most underdeveloped parts of the world – namely, Africa and Latin America.

Education – coupled with population – is a major driver of China and India’s rise. Both countries have enormous populations of young people. The combined population of Chinese and Indian young people is 10 times that of the U.S. China educates about 20% of young adults at the postsecondary level now – up from 3% twenty years ago, and has around 27 million student enrolled according to its Ministry of Education. This is well in excess of the United States, which has approximately 18 million student enrolled at the postsecondary level. India educates about 10% of young adults – approximately 12 million students – but has aspirations to raise its enrollment to 75 million in the next few decades. If both countries can continue to make progress increasing their college participation rates, those young people will be the engine of their economies for years to come.
The U.S. cannot compete with these emerging economic superpowers on the size of our college-educated population; we must be able to compete on the superior quality of education in our workforce and the ability of our people to innovate.

Other Competitors

Because of their rapid rise in educational attainment, and huge populations, China and India pose the greatest long-term competitive threat to the U.S. But many other nations have already surpassed us in educational attainment. Canada and several European and Asian nations educate a much larger share of their populations than we do; the U.S. is now ranked 10th in the percentage of young adults aged 25 to 34 with a postsecondary credential.

Simple rankings fail to take into account the range of educational structures and diversity of context across nations, but these data do make clear that the U.S. must increase the percentage of its population with postsecondary credentials in order to renew our economy and compete with the world’s best educated countries. In particular, we must accelerate our efforts to produce more workers with sub-baccalaureate certificates, industry certifications and associate degrees. Labor economists agree that the so-called “middle jobs” that these credentials prepare students to fill will be a rapidly growing segment of the economy in the years ahead.

New Workforce Demands

The demand for college-educated workers has more than doubled since the early 1970s and will continue to rise during this decade. Because of this demand, the personal economic returns to a college education have remained strong even as the ranks of the college-educated have grown.

As we look toward a workforce transformed by the retirement of the baby boomers, it is not at all clear that the U.S. can replace the well-educated workers that it will lose. If we cannot produce enough workers to meet demand, outsourcing of white collar jobs may grow from a trickle to a flood. Compounding our potential workforce shortage is the fact that – for the first time in recent history – we may be on the verge of producing a generation of young adults who have less education than those who preceded them.

A Tipping Point

Some analysts in the U.S. question the value of comparing our large, diverse nation to smaller countries such as Belgium or Norway, or even to countries such as Korea and Japan that have much more homogenous populations. But no one disputes the disturbing fact that educational attainment in the United States seems to be reaching a plateau. For years, Americans could count on each generation becoming better educated than the last. That is no longer the case; educational attainment in the U.S. seems to have stalled, with young people no more likely to have earned a degree than their older peers.

This situation is exactly opposite to what many other countries are experiencing. In Canada, for example, 39% of those aged 55 to 64 have a postsecondary credential – the same as in the U.S. – but young Canadians aged 25 to 34 have surged ahead of their older countrymen to a
postsecondary attainment rate of 56%. As a result, Canada now leads the world in educational attainment.

Equally disturbing is the dramatic disparity among ethnic groups when it comes to educational attainment. Of note is the very low attainment rate of Hispanics in the United States, our fastest growing ethnic population; currently, 17% of Hispanic adults aged 25-29 have earned at least an associate’s degree compared with 42% of similar aged Whites and 66% of similar aged Asian Americans. More than half of Hispanic young adults are immigrants, and only half of these people have completed high school – either in the U.S. or in their country of origin.

The conclusion I reach from these data is that America must act on several fronts. First, we must find a way to help recent immigrants, many of whom have never participated in our educational system and others who left our schools with minimal levels of proficiency, achieve at least a high school diploma so that they can earn a living wage in our economy and – hopefully – continue on to pursue postsecondary education. Second, we must ensure that students who complete high school graduate ready to succeed in college, gain access to our institutions, and complete a degree or certificate. Finally, we must reach out to the many adults who need a postsecondary credential in order to thrive in our competitive economy. In short, we need a national strategy to enhance America’s greatest natural resource: the knowledge, skills, drive, and creativity of our people.

**Keys to Access and Success**

What might such a strategy look like? At minimum, it will require a concerted national effort that boosts academic preparation; reaches out to underserved populations; resets the affordability to at least pre-recession levels; and creates new pathways that allow individuals to access higher education when and how it is convenient for them and build a portfolio of skills and credentials as they progress through their careers. Overarching all of these efforts to improve preparation, affordability and convenience must be a renewed focus on degree completion and student learning. Access without a reasonable chance of completing a high-quality credential is an empty promise.

**The Bold Goal**

The nation elected a new president who recognizes the aforementioned challenges. From his first days in office, President Obama has made higher education a top priority. In his first address to a joint session of Congress, he set the goal of the United States once again being the most educated nation in the world by 2020. This would require boosting the percentage of young adults with a postsecondary credential from the current level of 40% to 60% – an enormous increase.

President Obama has put dollars behind his words. Through the economic stimulus act and pending legislation to transform the student loan program, the Obama Administration will direct more than $120 billion to students and institutions. A sizable portion of these funds are aimed at expanding scientific research, but much of the money is devoted to expanding college readiness, access, and success. In addition, the Obama administration has created incentives through the economic stimulus package that have led 48 governors to pledge to adopt common college- and career-ready curriculum standards for high school graduation. Furthermore, the administration
has helped ease the burden of paying for college by sponsoring the largest funding increase in the Pell grant program’s history and expanding education tax credits to include low- and moderate-income families. Finally, the administration has placed special emphasis on community colleges because of their unique role in providing broad access to higher education, meeting local needs for economic development, and educating students to fill those fast-growing “middle jobs” in fields such as health care and information technology that are expected to grow rapidly during the coming decades.

With these funds – and the administration’s emphasis on attainment and degree production – have come high expectations and some disagreement over the best means to allocate the money. In particular, because the pending student loan legislation funnels funds through the states, there is concern that federal dollars could go toward general state fiscal relief and not toward the intended purpose of spurring innovation and spreading best practices for boosting retention and degree attainment. There is also concern about new authority for states to impose solutions on colleges or universities through a top-down bureaucracy.

**A Window of Opportunity**

As we confront the competitive challenges facing the United States – looking at where we stand today through the rearview mirror – it becomes clear that higher education is a lynchpin for our economic future. Because the new administration recognizes this core truth, and because the states are under such economic duress, higher education has enjoyed unprecedented federal support during the last year. This support is *not unconditional*; it comes with high expectations for increases in access and especially retention, learning, and degree attainment. If our largest financial institutions have become “too big to fail” and have had to learn to accept both federal support and new regulatory requirements, so we may find that higher education is now “too important to fail” and will have to demonstrate significant results in order to avoid potentially stifling and counter-productive regulation. We have a narrow window of opportunity to demonstrate that we are making demonstrable progress toward meeting the human capital needs of our society. If we cannot meet this challenge, we can expect reduced support, increased regulation, or perhaps both.

As we look ahead, we must keep several facts clearly in mind:

- Interest in accountability is bipartisan, and the pendulum has swung toward increased regulation in virtually all sectors. The upcoming election is unlikely to change this basic trend.

- The economic crisis has only increased calls from constituents to control college price increases and demonstrate that students are getting “value for the dollar.”

- The enormity of the budget deficit, now estimated at $1.6 trillion or 11% of GDP, will force us to make a stronger case that federal investment in higher education pays dividends in economic activity. Policymakers want more and better evidence.

I believe there is an opportunity in every challenge. This challenge gives higher education the opportunity to demonstrate in a meaningful way that we stand behind the quality of our work as
educators; that we are first and foremost devoted to the education of students; and that we accept
the solemn responsibility to prepare individuals to succeed in an increasingly competitive global
environment.
Evidence suggests the federal government is taking an increasingly active role in the nation’s educational activities. But how are states responding to the efforts and expectations put forth by the federal government, especially in the midst of the current economic crisis? Is the federal approach and myriad of federal goals practical considering today’s context? This panel provided an overview of fiscal and state policy issues affecting postsecondary education; addressed the state educational agenda and the various approaches states may take in pursuing federal attainment goals; highlighted who is going to shoulder the burden financially; and explained how to steer institutional politics and policy to synchronize institutional, state, and federal educational policy agendas.

Daniel J. Hurley
Director, State Relations and Policy Analysis
American Association of State Colleges and Universities

**Fiscal Conditions and Economic Outlook**

Following its worst six-month performance in 50 years, U.S. economic output returned to positive growth in the third quarter of 2009, with an expected year-end overall net increase of less than 1%, according to the National Association of Business Economics (NABE). As a subtle reminder of the swiftly changing geopolitical landscape, the recession has dampened China’s and India’s economic growth to the point where their GDPs will only grow in 2009 by 7.5% and 5.4%, respectively, according to IMF projections.

Despite increases in unemployment and reduced state revenues there are several economic indicators that suggest that the worst is behind us and a recovery is underway. A majority of economists believe that the recession (as formerly defined) came to an end in the third quarter of 2009; however, the National Bureau of Economic Research, a private firm that calculates the official dates of recessions, has yet to declare and end to the current downturn. Based on an analysis of employment rates, home prices, residential construction and manufacturing production figures by Moody’s Economy.com, 10 states and the District of Columbia have entered economic recovery mode. These include Alaska, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. While key national economic indicators are returning to positive growth, such is not the case when it comes to most states’ budget conditions, which will likely continue to be severely constrained for several years.

The most pronounced human toll of the recession is reflected in unemployment figures. Since the start of the recession in December 2007, an astonishing 7.3 million payroll jobs have evaporated. The national unemployment rate reached 10.2% in October 2009, the highest level in 26 years. Unemployment declined in 36 states in November, resulting in a national average of 10%. The number of individuals working part-time jobs but seeking full-time employment has reached a record 9.2 million. The combined unemployment and “under-employment” rate is 17%, the highest level in the 16 years that this reading has been calculated.

One silver lining is that the unemployment numbers associated with the recession once again bear out that education pays. As of November 2009, those with a college degree were less than one-half as likely to be unemployed compared to those with a high school diploma (10.4% compared to 4.9%). The numbers also affirm the importance of a core tenet of state colleges’ missions: facilitating college access and success that leads to upward economic mobility for
traditionally underserved populations. While the national unemployment rate is 10%, for African Americans it is 15.6%; among the ranks of the nation’s fastest growing demographic population, Hispanics, 12.7% are unemployed.

**Current State Budget Conditions**

*Historic Revenue Drop-Off:* For the first time on record, states’ overall spending declined for two consecutive years, shrinking 4.8% in FY09 and at least 4% in FY10, according to an analysis of latest state budget conditions by the National Governors Association (NGA) and National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO). A historic 7.5% drop in state revenues in FY09 reflects sharp declines in tax collections. State and local tax revenues fell 7% in the third quarter of 2009 from a year prior, according to the Census Bureau. Sales taxes declined 9% and income taxes plunged 12%. Combined, sales and income taxes make up roughly half of state and local tax revenues.

*Few States Spared:* Budgets in the great majority of states have been significantly and negatively affected by the current recession. The few states that have to this point largely weathered the economic downturn include North Dakota, Montana and Wyoming, thanks largely due to strong returns in agriculture and energy production (oil, coal). States previously thought to be escaping the recession’s wrath are now witnessing delayed effects in the form of tax revenue reductions; these include Oklahoma, Texas, and West Virginia.

*Several States Hit Particularly Hard by the Recession:* A recent Pew Center on the States study looked at a number of factors leading to both chronic and severe state budget gaps and have identified 10 states that have been especially hard hit by the recession. Collectively, these 10 states account for more than one-third of the nation’s population and economic output. Leading the list is California, the most populous state and eighth-largest economy in the world. Lawmakers in that state closed a $60 billion budget gap in closing out fiscal year 2009, and a $21 billion deficit already looms for the current and coming fiscal years. The ability of California lawmakers to address budget problems are constrained by unrealistic budget assumptions and a number of voter-imposed restrictions, including requirements that all budgets and tax increases pass the legislature by a two-thirds majority. Other states include neighboring Arizona, Nevada and Oregon, and fellow Sun Belt state Florida, which were hit especially hard by the burst housing bubble. The Midwestern states of Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin and Northeastern states of New Jersey and Rhode Island were among those with the greatest declines in revenues, largest budget gaps, highest unemployment and foreclosure rates and poor state government money-management practices. Close behind on the Pew Center list of especially hard-hit states are Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, New York and Hawaii. The report cites four common threads that have led to increased fiscal vulnerability in these states: unbalanced economies, revenues and expenditures out of alignment, a limited ability to act by the legislature and the putting off of tough decisions by state policymakers.
**State Budget Deficits**

*Big, Structural, and Here to Stay:* States passed fiscal year 2010 general fund budgets totaling $628 billion, 5.4% less than the year prior, according to the NASBO/NGA. Since the fiscal year began, states have cut $56 billion. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), persisting shortfalls totaling $28 billion exist for 36 states in the current fiscal year. The group’s assessment predicts another $56 billion in shortfalls across 35 states for fiscal year 2011 and $69 billion in shortfalls across 23 states in fiscal year 2012. All but two states, Montana and North Dakota, faced budget shortfalls for FY10.

*Medicaid—The Greatest Pressure on State Spending:* States face increasing health care costs need to replenish state pension programs funded by decimated investments, and face additional spending requirements stemming from provisions associated with acceptance of federal stimulus monies. Increased Medicaid spending has particularly problematic. States’ enrollment in Medicaid grew by an average of 5.4% in fiscal year 2009, the highest rate in six years, according to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation report. To fund the increasing caseload, states’ Medicaid spending grew by 7.9%, higher than the 5.8% projected growth. The current health care overall legislation in Congress seeks to expand Medicaid coverage, adding to states’ spending burden; this may well further erode general fund discretionary dollars that compose the public finance portion of state colleges and universities.

*State Unemployment Compensation Funds Running Dry:* The recession’s jobless toll is draining unemployment compensation funds so fast that according to federal projections, 40 state programs will go broke within two years and need $90 billion in loans to keep issuing the benefit checks, reports the *Washington Post*. Currently, 25 states have run out of unemployment money and have borrowed $24 billion from the federal government to cover the gaps. The shortfalls are adding pressure to state governments to either raise taxes or decrease the aid payments to unemployed individuals. State unemployment compensation funds are separated from general budgets, so when shortfalls exist, only two primary solutions are considered – either reducing the benefit or raising the payroll tax. Debates over the state benefits programs are taking place in Indiana, Kansas, Nevada, South Carolina and Vermont.

**Recessionary Impacts on State Higher Education Finance, Policy and Programs**

*Recession-Induced Reductions in State Support for Higher Education:* The recession’s impact on public postsecondary funding is evident in preliminary, soon-to-be released data from the State Higher Education Executive Officer’s State Higher Education Finance report. In fiscal year 2009 state appropriations for higher education fell by 2%, but federal fiscal stabilizations funds permitted an increase of 1%. State funding fell another 3% in fiscal year 2010, but fiscal stabilization funds attenuated that decrease to minus-2%. In fiscal year 2010, 5% of all support from higher education came from the fiscal stabilization fund. Within the states, that percentage ranges from zero to 18%. Fiscal year 2009 funding comprised 10% or more of stabilization funds in three states. For fiscal year 2010, funding comprised 10% or more of stabilization funds in nine states.

*Inflation – In Check for the Moment:* The costs of goods, services, pay and employee benefits in higher education rose 2.3% for the year ending June 30 – a figure that is (as typical) nearly a
percentage point higher than the Consumer Price Index for the same period but less than the 5% rate that colleges experienced in the 2008–09 academic year. Administrative salaries and fringe-benefit costs witnessed the biggest increases.

**State Student Loan Guarantee Programs:** Credit remains tight for some states’ student loan programs. The programs have also been impacted by reduced federal subsidies and the threat of legislation in Congress to end the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program.

**State Student Aid Programs:** While a politically unpopular move, some states are scaling back their student aid and scholarship programs. States that have either made changes or at least threatened to make changes in funding allocations or eligibility to grant and scholarship programs include Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington and West Virginia. California students were spared in 2009 from a major cut to the huge Cal Grant program.

**State Loan Forgiveness Programs:** Reductions are being made to state loan forgiveness programs aimed at incenting students to pursue training in high-demand occupations and/or serve in geographically remote or underserved areas. Cuts have been made to such programs in California, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri and Pennsylvania.

**State Pre-Paid and 529 Savings Programs:** Turbulence in the stock market has led to huge losses to some states’ college savings programs. A recent *New York Times* investigation revealed that 16 of the existing 18 state prepaid college savings plans currently have funds insufficient to meet future obligations as a result of the stock market slump and rising college costs. Programs under particularly severe fiscal stress include those in Alabama, Illinois and South Carolina. The board of Alabama’s pre-paid tuition plan has just announced that it will no longer pay participants’ full tuition at public state universities. Instead, starting next fall, it will pay a fixed amount based on average tuition costs. Only two states have programs that do not have actuarial deficits, those in Colorado and Florida.

**Other Recessionary Impacts Affecting Higher Education Institutions**

**Enrollment Up, at an All-Time High:** Managing enrollment has been a particularly turbulent exercise in this recession. Preliminary data released by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) indicated that for the fall 2009 semester, enrollment increased across the board, with 71% of publics and 52% of privates reporting gains. However, more private institutions than publics (24% vs. 14%) reported declines. In terms of freshman enrollment, public colleges were more likely than privates to see increases (58% vs. 44%). And the gap was greater for new transfer students, suggesting that cost may be a motivating factor for the rising numbers of transfers. Of public institutions, 72% reported increases in transfer enrollment, compared to only 45% of private institutions. Still not known is the extent to which public colleges will enroll fewer out-of-state students as a result of decreasing ability for students to pay non-resident tuition rates – or whether the opposite will be true, based on state institutions’ stepped up efforts to recruit higher tuition-paying students.

The share of 18- to 24-year-olds attending college in the United States hit an all-time high in October 2008, driven by a recession-era surge in enrollments at community colleges, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of newly released data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Just
under 11.5 million students, or 39.6% of all young adults ages 18 to 24, were enrolled in either a two- or four-year college in October 2008 (the most recent date for which comprehensive nationwide data are available). Both figures—the absolute number as well as the share—are at their highest level ever.

Institutional Financial Aid on the Rise: The aforementioned NACAC survey found that 90% of colleges reported increases in financial aid applications this year, with 74% of colleges reporting an increase in the number of students offered institutional grant aid.

Private Fundraising Expected to Rebound after Slump: The latest Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Fundraising Index (released in July) predicts an average decline of giving to education of 3.9% for the 2008–09 academic year. However, the index also predicts a relatively modest 2.5% increase in giving to education for the 2009–10 academic year. Over the last 20 years, the average annual rate of growth for giving to education has been 7.1%.

Endowments Take a Hit: The average investment return for more than 500 college and university endowments was minus-19% for the fiscal year ending June 30, as reported by the Chronicle of Higher Education, and based on the preliminary annual report on endowments by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and the Commonfund Institute. Since 2000 there have been only two other years when average endowment returns were negative: 2001, when returns were down 3.6%, and 2002, when there fell 6%.

Some Private Institutions in Tough Straits: Broader economic circumstances are affecting the various sectors within higher education differently. Perhaps most vulnerable are small and less well-endowed private liberal arts institutions. Even a small decline in enrollment combined with massive losses in their endowment portfolios can result in financial catastrophe. In a recent assessment, the U.S. Department of Education indicated that 114 private nonprofit degree-granting colleges were in such fragile financial condition at the end of their last fiscal year that they had failed the department’s fiscal-responsibility test. Such conditions could lead to closures and/or consolidations in some cases. Meanwhile, some private colleges have increased financial aid and decreased selectivity to help sustain enrollment in the economic downturn, with a significant number still expecting tuition and fee revenues to decline this year, based on a recent survey by Moody’s Investors Service. However, some institutions have budgeted conservatively, resulting in upgrades in bond ratings for 19 colleges in 2009.

Other Higher Education State Policy Issues in the Mix

Tuition Policy for Undocumented Students: Considerable legislative activity continues in state legislatures regarding public college admissions and resident tuition eligibility for undocumented individuals. At the federal level, President Obama has indicated intentions to initiate substantive immigration reform. It is debatable whether congressional action will take place in 2010 given mid-term elections and more pressing issues being addressed such as health care reform, climate and energy legislation, and financial regulatory changes. On the state level, much attention will be given to the first state supreme court case on the issue, in California, where that state’s statute providing for in-state tuition to non-residents is being challenged. The New Jersey legislature recently failed to pass a hotly contested measure to provide in-state tuition rates to undocumented students who meet specific conditions.
Textbook Costs: Since 2004, 36 states have introduced and 17 have enacted legislation addressing college textbook issues such as greater transparency from publishers and institutions, faculty behavior and ethics in adopting texts, student access to credit, and exemption of textbooks from state sales tax. Several studies have also been requested by state legislatures. In the summer of 2008, as part of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, new provisions were included that address textbook concerns related to publishers, institutions, faculty, and bookstores, as well as accessibility for students with disabilities. Since HEOA’s passage, some state legislatures have focused on incorporating the federal provisions into state law and others have introduced new requirements going beyond federal law. In 2009 a number of state legislatures, including Washington, California, Texas, and Florida, have also turned attention to promoting the development and use of open source course materials as a possible way to lower textbook prices at both the K-12 and postsecondary level.

System Governance, Restructuring and Tuition-Setting Authority: The recession has facilitated discussion and action on issues of governance and restructuring. Discussions have taken place in Maine, and calls for system realignment have taken place in Georgia and Tennessee. Most recently, Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour unveiled a budget that includes sweeping reorganization of state government, including proposals to merge eight universities into five, involving the consolidation of three HBCUs.

Affirmative Action: Arizona is the first state to put affirmative action on the state’s 2010 general election ballot. It marks the first time that a ban on preferences in the public hiring process has been put on the ballot by the legislature, as opposed to by Ward Connelly and his network. California, Washington, and Michigan are other states that have passed bans on affirmative action via the ballot box. A federal appeals court is about to consider a lawsuit challenging Michigan’s ban against racial preferences in public university admissions and government hiring. Civil rights groups and University of Michigan students, faculty and applicants say the 2006 ballot measure approved by voters is unconstitutional, and cite that the constitutional amendment has created an unfair process where universities give weight to geographical diversity and legacy status but not racial identity. Supporters say the law reflects the will of the people.

Veterans’ Education: Some states are taking complementary measures to facilitate college access that was greatly expanded via the New GI Bill. The Yellow Ribbon Program contained in the legislation may affect the enrollment pattern of veterans differently across the various higher education sectors.

Dennis P. Jones
President
The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Considering the economic climate, states today face large but surmountable challenges. As of last count, 7.3 million jobs had been lost, with many more Americans underemployed, and 15 million homes are under foreclosure. By 2011, 36 states will have budget deficits, and by 2012, 22 states will face $70 billion dollars in deficits. Experts estimate that it may take until 2013 to reestablish 2008 state revenue levels. Consequently, overall state spending is down in higher education as many states redirect funds from the education sector to meet budget shortfalls in
other areas. This trend is especially concerning considering the attainment challenge facing our nation.

By 2020, President Obama has pledged to once again establish the United States as having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. States such as Arizona, Colorado, and Kentucky have pledged to double their total number of college graduates, and states such as Minnesota, Texas, and Oregon have boldly committed themselves to equally clear and ambitious attainment goals. Why is this so important?

The United States trails nearly a dozen other industrialized nations when it comes to the percentage of adults with an associate degree or higher. In fact, the gap is so substantial that the United States would need to generate approximately 11.7 million additional degrees in the next decade, an average growth rate of 5.44% per year, to meet President Obama’s attainment goal. States such as Arizona and Nevada would need percentage increases between 6% and 7% per year. The nation would need an additional 21 million degree-holders if it hopes to close racial and ethnic gaps in that timeframe. Simply put, if the nation hopes to be economically viable in the global market, it will need a better educated workforce.

Though the aforementioned statistics are disheartening, there are ways states can respond and meet the attainment challenge. First, we need to set clear attainment goals with long-term and year-by-year benchmarks while adapting these goals to unique state conditions and needs. It is unreasonable to assume every state has an equal capacity to enhance their attainment rates when each state is facing disproportionate economic challenges. Next, we need to change our approach to budgeting, aligning our finance policies with our attainment goals and with one another. More specifically, state policies related to institutional appropriations, tuition, student financial aid, and capital should work in harmony with one another in pursuit of common outcomes. States must also shift from an institutional equity model to an investment model that focuses on developing cost-effective systems, identifying and investing in student success and practices with specific and desirable outcomes, and distributing funds in ways proven to enhance productivity within our institutions of higher learning. In addition, we must change the relationship that currently exists between states and institutions. There needs to be a general philosophy in place such that states respect the operational autonomy of institutions while steering institutions to uphold a public mission. This can be done by having states focus on setting goals while providing institutions with latitude in how goals are achieved. Finally, states must keep the agenda alive, providing on-going opportunities to remind all players within the education sector about the collective agenda. Only then will institutions and the states in which they operate be able to meet the nation’s shared attainment needs.

Jane Wellman
Executive Director
Delta Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity, and Accountability

There is no question that the United States must boost postsecondary attainment if it is to compete globally in the new century. Much of the nation’s success will depend on the extent to which its colleges and universities step up and embrace the public policy agenda. This entails:

- Integrating academic and fiscal policies around the attainment agenda
• Re-booting budget and costs management practices
• Addressing cost structures on both the academic and administrative side
• Improving learning productivity
• Investing in areas that improve student success, including high quality learning outcomes
• Addressing the public value proposition

The first area of focus requires that institutions embrace public priorities for higher education. All institutions are responsible for meeting state and national attainment goals, regardless of what percentage of their budgets come from state funds, “independent” institutions similarly have a public responsibility by virtue of their non-profit status. Institutions need to align their standards and expectations for success in ways that are appropriate to this mindset. This means working with K-12 schools to create a better aligned and fluid system: designing placement exams that are available to high school students, are up-to-date, and are aligned with course materials; supporting high standards for high school graduation; reducing the need for remediation; and creating admissions requirements that are clear, easily digestible, and communicated to students years before they are college eligible. This also means setting institution-specific goals for access and attainment and using data-driven methods to effectively monitor progress toward meeting these goals.

The next area of focus is centered on fiscal practices. Institutions must be fiscally more strategic and focus more on cost reductions and productivity increases than on cyclical budget cuts and cost shifts that place a greater financial burden on students through dramatic tuition increases. Institutions can make permanent reductions to cost structures by closely examining their administrative costs. They need to determine the reasons behind incremental growth in their administrative costs and respond accordingly. Effective cost management also requires addressing many of the spending areas that have been on a kind of auto-pilot in many institutions: employee benefits, backoffice administrative and support functions, procurement, energy, debt costs, and spending on athletics. Concurrently, on the academic side, institutions should look at ways to restructure their academic program offerings to improve focus and cost-effectiveness, including reductions in high cost/low demand programs, accompanied by reinvestments in areas that are central to the attainment agenda. This approach should also be taken when reviewing financial aid practices, so as to reduce merit aid commitments that do not enhance student attainment. Finally, institutions should focus on building a cost-effective undergraduate curriculum by reviewing course offerings for general education, evaluating course sequencing and scheduling, building the curriculum around learning outcomes, and increasing options for distance-based delivery.

Furthermore, institutions need to improve their learning productivity, meaning getting more students through to degrees while holding spending constant. This can be accomplished by requiring fewer credits for degree completion; by moving to reduce student attrition by drawing upon low-cost best practices recommendations; by increasing credit-by-exam; by increasing the availability of distance-based learning programs; by increasing the proportion of graduates who meet goals for critical learning; and by increasing the proportion of students who remain and are employed within the state in which an institution operates. The focus must be on strategic finance, increasing throughput without changing inputs, including resource generation.
Consistent with this perspective, institutions must invest in areas that improve student access and success. This requires institutions to allocate instruction resources to areas of high student attrition, often lower division instruction; to allocate adequate resources for student services such as advising, course sequencing, and peer support; to invest in first-year programs for at-risk students, including learning communities and bridge programs; to expand opportunities for undergraduate service learning and research; and to increase work-study via internships, campus employment, and community service placements.

Finally, institutions must more effectively address the public value proposition. This is essential to the reinvestment of public resources and continued credibility. Institutions should have a coordinated and open strategy that outlines and communicates the institution’s value; documents strategies for improving cost-effectiveness and productivity; promotes accountability by engaging with boards to oversee the value agenda; and translates goals, progress, and evidence of effectiveness to public audiences.

**Roderick Chu**  
Chancellor Emeritus  
Ohio Board of Regents

President Obama has stated the every American should have the opportunity to enroll in at least one year of postsecondary education. The idea behind this is to provide every American with the capacity to be an informed and productive citizen. That being said, the American system of higher education, though arguably one of the most equitable and revered systems in the world, is suffering. Paul Lingenfelter, president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) recently gave a presentation called, “The World is Flat: Implications for Higher Education Planners and Leaders.” This presentation provides valuable context for understanding where we are and where we need to be headed if we are to meet the nation’s educational, economic, and social needs.

Over the past 25 years, state funding has risen and fallen depending upon the state of the economy, with the end result being a flat commitment to educational funding by states overall. Economic decline leads to inadequate funding for higher education, which leads to inadequate graduates for economic growth, which, as one would guess, leads to economic decline. It is a vicious cycle, but one that becomes a death spiral when one also highlights how economic and social decline within a knowledge and innovation economy leads to inadequate funding for higher education and political demagoguery, which leads to inadequate graduates for both economic and social growth, which leads to economic and social decline. It is the kind of cycle that does not allow for the type of change and innovation required for the United States if it is to advance its economic and social causes.

The only way to break the vicious cycle and/or death spiral is to:

- Shift from access to completion by changing the role of enrollment professionals from that of gatekeepers to that of facilitators, and renewing a commitment to upholding standards and achievement
• Move away from focusing on seat time to instead focusing on competencies so students can more efficiently learn the knowledge and skills they need to be successful graduates.

• Embrace continuous education that is customizable to meet the specific academic and social needs of students.

• Develop new models of compensation and funding for faculty and instructors that rewards value added rather than simply seat time.

Though it might seem overwhelming at first to reinvent the nation’s education system, it would be wise to heed the guidance of trailblazers like Liz Coleman, president of Bennington College. She reminds us that being overwhelmed is the first step if you are serious about trying to address things that really matter and will make a difference. She reminds us that we have an incredible capacity as individuals to generate new ideas and as a collective society to build upon one another’s ideas and change the world. Let us make a conscious effort to work together toward building a more informed and effective system of education in the United States.
Martha Kanter  
Under Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education

It is a pleasure to speak at this conference hosted by the USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice. The center is doing great work and promoting the goals that will help college admission, student financial aid, and degree completion processes become better informed, more expertly practiced, and more equitable. The center’s work will help as we look at the emerging issues and trends that will improve access to higher education.

In my new role as Under Secretary of Education, I have been working to leverage innovative ideas and recommendations from across the nation to meet President Obama’s goal of having the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world. I am looking forward to sharing the plans and strategies we are working on in the Department of Education – and you will see how central our work to fulfill the Obama Administration’s education reform agenda is to you and your organization. We at the Department of Education and this Administration share your common goals.

Challenges in Education

Historically, the purpose of K-12 education was to prepare young people to earn the high school diploma, a fundamental milestone for success in work and society. Nationally 27% of students are dropping out of high school. That is nearly 30 percent of our students—and more than half of our Latino students drop out or fail to complete high school on time. Many Latino students never take the SAT or ACT. Similar challenges face other minority students, who have overcome enormous challenges and face adversity like not having information to college aid information or living with parents who do not speak English or cannot support their goals for higher education.

Last year, 1.2 million teens did not graduate high school. This equates to 7,000 dropouts every day. In some of our largest cities, more than half of all teens who should be in school have dropped out. Of these, the majority are dropping out in the first two years of high school.

There is a real and urgent economic impact created by the achievement gap in America’s schools. McKinsey reported on it and concluded if we had been able to close the international achievement gap over the last 25 years, the U.S. GDP in 2008 would have been $1-2 trillion dollars higher – that’s between 9 to 16 percent of GDP; and, if we had been able to close the racial achievement gap where Hispanic and Black performance had caught up with that of White students by 1998, GDP in 2008 would have been $300-$500 billion higher or roughly 2-4 percent of GDP.

The days of good-paying jobs that required little to no education are numbered. The fastest-growing sector of jobs is “middle skills” jobs that require more than secondary school but less than a bachelor’s degree. Yet, approximately 93 million adults in the U.S. lack the basic literacy and numeracy skills necessary to compete for these middle skills jobs. Of these 93 million, 13.5 million adults have such low levels of literacy that they are unable to complete the simplest literacy tasks, such as reading a newspaper or reading and understanding short health-related instructions. Another 35 million have difficulty locating information in pamphlets and answering
simple questions about short readings. Among those already in the workforce between the ages of 18–64, 75 million do not hold a postsecondary credential and are not enrolled in college.

The National Council of Economic Advisors report, *Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow*, indicates that today’s jobs disproportionately employ workers at the highest skill levels and that educational requirements for the fastest-growing job sectors require non-routine analytical and interactive tasks. We have to get more students to finish high school and enroll in colleges. Barely half of high school graduates from lower income families attend college. Even worse, too few of them complete college. Only about one in four low-income college students who start full-time graduate within six years.

There are more pressing demands in the global economy. A generation ago, the U.S. was the most educated country in the world. Since then, ten countries have passed us by – South Korea, Canada, Japan and Russia among them. Many countries have expanded their higher education systems and access to them. President Obama has said, in the era of the global economy, “education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success ---it’s a prerequisite to success.” These profound shifts in the economy drive the administration’s determination to make higher education more affordable, accessible and more cost-effective.

**The President’s Goal and Why We Need to Make it Happen**

President Obama has a goal that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. Secretary Duncan called this the North Star and we are working aggressively to meet this goal on so many fronts. We have what Obama calls a cradle to career agenda including an early childhood agenda, our K-12 agenda, and a bill that is now in Congress to fund higher education. The president's goals are ambitious—but so is the challenge. We cannot create a seamless cradle-to-career pipeline of college-ready students by continuing to do what we are doing now if we only do it just a little bit better. To meet the President's goals we need to transform how our schools and colleges are doing business. We need to bring the promising solutions to scale.

**The Higher Education Agenda**

The Obama administration is providing the biggest investment in student aid since the GI Bill. This will help meet the President’s goal to produce a higher percentage of college graduates than any other country in the world by the end of the next decade. Part of our role is to get money out the door: billions of dollars in grants and loans that consumers can use in the higher education marketplace, to get the education and training that they decide they want. It is consumer-driven so consumers can decide whether to go to a baccalaureate program, or a community college transfer program, or a career-focused program. The fiscal 2010 budget will provide $129 billion in new grants, loans, and other assistance – a 32 percent increase since fiscal 2008. More than 14 million students and their families will use this assistance to pay for college. This is an increase of a third over the amount of spending that was available in 2008. Most of this new higher education funding and expanded assistance to help students complete college will especially benefit low-income and minority students.
Not only do we want to get more students into higher education, but we also want to have better ways to measure and assess what college students are learning. This will inform whether our citizens are being educated to meet the demands of the global economy. The 21st century is changing higher education. Today’s job market demands new skills and adaptability. As we increase access, we have to demand better quality. Current assessment methods are inadequate. The Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) initiative will help assess learning outcomes on an international scale by creating measures that would be valid for all cultures and languages. We also need a voluntary system of accountability. The success of institutions depends on how students are served. Simply put, to improve student learning we must improve assessment.

This administration intends to improve accountability to students and the public. If we do a better job of measuring college outcomes, our students will be better prepared as a result.

Over the next decade, our higher education plan will:

- Increase Pell Grants to $5,550 next year and will index future increases to inflation plus 1 percent
- Grant almost 8 million students Pell Grants in the 2010-11 academic year—boosting the numbers by about a million students
- Increase the cash value by 13 percent
- Provide low interest loans to 2.7 million students through the Perkins Loan program and change the program to reward colleges that control tuition increases
- Help to reduce student debt for college graduates by way of:
  - An income-contingent repayment plan that can reduce their monthly loan payments in a tough job market
  - Loan forgiveness: Graduates working in public service will have their student loans forgiven after 10 years of income-contingent payments.
  - Encouraging graduates to pursue careers as teachers, doctors and nurses in public hospitals, public safety, and other professions vital to our nation’s security and prosperity
- Move to direct loans because they are the most efficient and cost-effective way to finance college loans

**American Graduation Initiative**

President Obama has additional plans for America’s community colleges. He has called for an additional 5 million community college graduates—both degree and certificate earners—by 2020. The American Graduation Initiative will help us address the problem of our students being underprepared for the rigors of higher education. This $12 billion investment is so important because during times of economic turmoil our community colleges and the services they provide are in higher demand. The American Graduation Initiative will offer $9 billion in competitive grants, challenging community colleges to pursue innovative, results-oriented strategies in exchange for federal funding. It will fund programs that connect students looking for jobs with businesses that are looking to hire.
I also want to tell you about Open Education Resources. We will invest $50 million annually over the next 10 years to create world-class online college and high school courses that will be freely available any time of the day or night. Teams of experts in subject matter, teaching and technology applications will create the open online courses based on research into effective teaching practices, understanding of how students learn and the very best content in the field. By opening up the digital doorway to the best online higher education and high school courses available, we will provide millions of Americans with the knowledge and skills they need to advance their education and succeed in our global society.

The Reason for Arts AND Sciences

Our short term goals are educating students so they can enter the workforce. But what does a highly-skilled workforce really mean? We cannot just give students training to fill jobs; jobs are changing. We must give them the skills to succeed in a multitude of ever-changing careers. You have likely heard of the call to prepare students in the STEM fields. We also need to make sure that they participate in the liberal arts because research and evidence supports theory that participation in the arts increases comprehension of and learning capabilities of students in math and science. Daniel Pink advocates for moving from STEM to STEAM (including the arts). Many more jobs require critical and innovative thinking, so background in multiple disciplines is required. Frans Johansson says in his book, The Medici Effect that when and where "different cultures, domains, and disciplines stream together toward a single point," they may "connect, allowing for established concepts to clash and combine, ultimately forming a multitude of new, groundbreaking ideas." One example he uses is of an architect who studied how termites cool their tower-like mounds of dirt and investigated natural ecosystems so he could build an office building without air conditioning in Zimbabwe. Another example is the telecommunications engineer that has been is trying to figure out how to route telecom messages through a haphazard routing system. After he meets an ecologist, who studies social insects, and learns more about how ants search for food, he applies it to the routing of telecom message packets, which now help unmanned aerial vehicles search for terrorists in Afghanistan, among other things.

There is a reason for arts and sciences:

- The melding of several disciples can lead to an explosion of creativity and innovation
- Nano technology is a melding of disciplines
- 20 years ago biotechnology was not a field, but biology merged with technology
- At Stanford there exists an Artificial Intelligence Laboratory - do research and use a multidiscipline approach involving music, math, and computer science

In closing, the current economic crisis shows that we must think strategically and systematically about how best to invest federal dollars to ensure that our programs assist people in obtaining the necessary skills to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce. We want consumers to have the information that they need to make the decisions that will benefit them and their communities in the long term, helping us make progress toward the President’s 2020 goal. At the Department of Education we all share the view that it is more important than ever that the Department ensure that the right aid gets to the right students, with the right end result: ensuring that students have the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge to be successful in the
workforce and in their communities. We need a paradigm shift: from the view of education and training as a one-shot opportunity to a lifelong pursuit. Our administration is committed to doing all of this. Our goals are ambitious, but with your help, your partnership and your leadership – we will succeed.
Each morning when I awake I have the privilege of looking at a work by the artist Enrique Chagoya that is on my bedroom wall over my dresser. It is entitled *Illegal Spirit in Black and White*. It is deeply moving and deeply political – and puts a human face on an issue that I contend must be viewed on a human, enlightened level. Chagoya’s image is that of a child looking out, hands up, palms out as if they were pressed up against a glass wall that separates the child from an as-yet unrealized future. It is a powerful image – and one which inspires me. The late Tomas Rivera – scholar, poet, activist – once said, “Never underestimate the power of the image.” He understood images can carry dreams and hopes and visions of a better future – a future we are here to discuss. He also believed that education was the surest route to empowerment and that we must believe in the future. There is irony in the title of Chagoya’s work, because the issue of immigration, especially for those who are undocumented in this country, is not a black and white one, at least in the way so many critics of immigration try to paint the scenario:

Black and White,
Right and Wrong,
Fair and Unfair,
Legal and Illegal.

The College Board’s strong public support of the DREAM Act stems from a commitment to connect all students to college success, including the 65,000 high school seniors who graduate lacking legal status in this country.

I will look at *Illegal Spirit in Black and White* upon my return from Los Angeles and think of Chagoya’s words:

“In a world which has masses of people who move, we are talking about a spiritual experience in everybody. Everyone is an immigrant of some kind.”

Los Angeles captures the spirit of the immigrant, and I can’t think of a better place to host this conference.

The age of Obama began for me in 1979 when Barry Obama arrived from Hawaii to begin his studies at Occidental College – right here in Los Angeles, where I served as his freshman residence director. I had arrived at Oxy fresh out of Stanford four years earlier to serve as the admission officer for Chicano students, the financial aid advisor to Chicano students, and the student affairs advisor to Chicano students – all wrapped into one entry level position which paid $9,500 a year. I remember feeling wealthy. In 1981, Barack Obama began his studies at Columbia University the same year National Book Award finalist Edwidge Danticant moved from her native Haiti to NYC. Edwidge, who moderated our Inspiration Schools Award ceremony several years ago, has been on my mind as her family’s homeland of Haiti has faced such devastation. In the preface of a recent College Board publication entitled, “Words Have No Borders: Student voices on Immigration, Language and Culture,” she writes:
When, as a new arrival in the United States, my heavy Haitian Creole accent made me too shy to speak, I could always pour my soul out in my notebooks and journals, and even in class assigned essays. To have anyone ask me to express myself, on paper, in my new language, was as thrilling as watching snow fall for the first time.

Words have no borders. Every experience deserves a hearing. Everyone has a story to tell and we are all the better for the telling. Like so much in our world, the immigrant experience is being redefined every day, one singular individual at a time. Currently, one out of four children in the United States is born to foreign-born parents. The beauty of this country, unlike many others, is that each of these children has as much right to be an American as someone whose parents and grandparents and great-grandparents were also born here.

Our current president is, like me, and like our writers, the child of an immigrant. At a February 2008 debate in Austin, Texas, then-candidate Barack Obama said, “…[T]his world is becoming more independent, and part of the process of America’s continued leadership in the world is going to be our capacity to communicate across boundaries, across borders.”

For me, the notion of Communicating “across boundaries, across borders” is at the heart of the Obama era:

ACROSS the borders that define countries;
ACROSS the boundaries between K-12 and HE, and two-year and four-year colleges;
ACROSS the borders that separate the neighborhoods of the haves and have-nots;
ACROSS the boundaries between student access and student success; and,
ACROSS the borders between student, staff, and faculty cultures.

Although over the past 24 hours we have discussed the many boundaries and borders that serve as barriers to student success, the one I find most disturbing is the boundary of acceptability we have set that allows for such inequity in our educational system – both at the K-12 level and at the higher education level. I want us to think about this together.

A picture of the global economy has already been presented – I will add to the picture and share my belief that every student – high school or college, inner city or rural, two-year or four-year – should have the opportunity to see herself or himself as a global citizen and this should be one of the factors in defining a quality education in 2010. I will also recommend that as we think “big” about access and success, and that we use language and develop solutions that embrace our new student diversity rather than use language that equates our changing demographics as the root of the problem.

One of the best ways we can serve higher education is to put more and better prepared students on the door steps of our nation's colleges and universities, and the College Board is doing all it can to contribute to this important effort. We must think both nationally and internationally as we prepare our students for the 21st century workforce and for 21st century leadership in a global
economy. To remain competitive in the global economy, critical thinking must be front and center in our classrooms, and its value reflected in our college admission programs.

Higher education can be a valuable contributor to President Obama’s focus on global understanding. Higher education in this country has a long-standing role in supporting internationalism through enrolling international students, and through its academic and study abroad programs. The commissioners on the 1946 Commission on Higher Education created by President Truman observed that colleges and universities have “a unique opportunity to offer an experience in tolerance and understanding which grows out of democratic relations with students from various national and religious backgrounds.” The futurist Jean Francois Rischard, a presenter at our National AP Conference, supports this idea in a more contemporary context: "Education is key to building the sense of global citizenship that global-problem-solving requires. And it is a major tool for developing values that may spare the next generation unnecessary obsolete tensions between civilizations." As we look to the future, in 2025 nearly 8 million students will study trans-nationally, compared to approximately 3 million this year. On his recent visit to China, President Obama shared his vision of having 100,000 American students studying in China. This will not happen without strong support from American colleges and universities.

The United States must remain the leader in educating international students. With greater competition from other countries for international students, U.S. institutions are increasing their efforts to reach out to international students. Currently 20% of all international students enroll in the United States, representing less than 4% of our country’s higher education enrollment. USC ranks at the very top of American universities in the number of international students it enrolls (approximately 7500 in 2008/2009) and California ranks number one among the states with more than 93,000 international students. One of the meaningful ways the College Board serves our U.S. colleges and universities is through our work with the U.S. State Department in providing training to Education USA advisors who work throughout the world to promote American higher education; and through sending admission deans abroad to represent U.S. higher education.

I cannot touch upon international education without sharing with you an excerpt from a speech given by Sir Michael Barber last month at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences. He reminds us of the need for a different type of education to ensure a more peaceful and equitable world:

For this, we need a deeper education which develops thought as well as knowledge; character as well as intellect; dialog as well as reflection; humility as well as leadership; and above all, which has a basis in the ethics on which our futures depend. We need this education for everyone – the poor, the oppressed and the marginal as well as the wealthy, the powerful and well-connected. And we need this education to tackle the complex, difficult reality of human existence; to legitimize and encourage debate of conflicting accounts of the past and divergent views of the future.

I agree with Sir Michael and President Obama that we must all embrace the notion that there must be high standards of education for every child, not just for an elite sector.
College affordability and college success are priorities for the Obama Administration. Higher education must demonstrate to Congress and state legislatures that it is controlling costs and maximizing available resources. As highlighted in the College Board Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education report, "Coming to Our Senses: Education and the American Future," our country’s economic engine is dependent on students working harder in school to be better prepared for the rigors of college; and many more students who start college, especially low-income and minority students, completing the requirements to earn a college degree.

The Commission’s Report, in line with the President’s vision of significantly increasing the number of college graduates, supports a goal of ensuring that by the year 2025, fully 55% of young Americans are completing their schooling with a community college degree or higher through its recommendation of a 10-part action plan:

1. Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families.
2. Improve middle and high school college counseling.
3. Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs.
4. Align the K-12 education system with international standards and college admissions expectations.
5. Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention.
6. Clarify and simplify the admissions process.
7. Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying and making financial aid processes more transparent.
8. Keep college affordable.
9. Dramatically increase college completion rates.

To advance this agenda, the College Board has committed itself to preparing and issuing an annual evaluation report tracking national progress toward the goal of 55% and on indicators tied to the 10 benchmarks above — and to do this evaluation on a state-by-state basis wherever possible.

Our research, policies, and practices related to increasing the number of underrepresented students in the college pipeline must be group specific and community driven.

Financial aid is an increasing important factor in making college affordable for many families, thus it is not surprising that it is also a priority of the Obama Administration. The report from the Rethinking Student Aid Study Group brought together by the College Board with support from Lumina Foundation for Education, the Spencer Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to develop proposals for improving the federal student aid system offers recommendations to simplify the system, improve the federal loan process, develop a federal savings program for low-income families, and reward states and institutions that support student success. The report and its full recommendations are on the College Board Web site. During these economically challenging times, a special effort must be made at all levels of government to support the aspirations of students through strong financial aid programs.
The role of faculty was mentioned briefly yesterday, and I wish to add my thoughts. Faculty members are at the heart of our institutions of higher education and have the opportunity to be at the heart of the solutions we need to educate more students more effectively and more efficiently. College and university faculty must be willing to step forward and commit to educating and graduating more students, even if it means more hours in the classroom. At the same time, we must do a better job in helping the public better understand the value of the original research in which faculty members are engaged outside the classroom. Research and innovation must remain hallmarks of American higher education.

Community colleges are a great innovation of American higher education and will play an even larger role in launching the college careers for students. We must make certain that the path from community colleges to four-year institutions is well-paved and well-marked. High school teachers and counselors must reinforce the idea to students and parents that "college readiness" applies to two-year as well as four-year colleges.

The report of the College Board’s National Commission on Community Colleges, “Winning the Skills Race and Strengthening America’s Middle Class,” outlines an action agenda for community colleges. Its recommendation largely parallel the American Graduation Initiative, which focuses on curriculum tied to work force, degree completion, and two-year college to four-year college transfer opportunities, especially in STEM areas. I hope you will read the report, which is on the College Board Website.

Let us think more deeply about how we can support the aspiration of community college students by focusing on their major concerns: academic preparation, money, and course credit. There is a need for partnership between K-12, two-year colleges, and four-year colleges to address these issues. I encourage four-year colleges to make a special effort to reach out to high school seniors who are community college bound in their final semester of high school to let them know that transfer admission is a real possibility and what they need to do to make that happen.

Last night we heard in Secretary Kanter’s voice the enthusiasm, optimism, and commitment to America’s students, to America’s future. The Administration’s priorities make good sense to me:

Success versus simply access (completion);
Effectiveness and efficiency;
Research and innovation;
Increased opportunities for low-income students;
Increased resources for community colleges.

This is a moment of opportunity to move education forward, and I encourage us as educators, policymakers, and researchers to seize the moment.

Before sitting down, I must share with you one more thing. Earlier this week I heard a presentation by Nancy Zimpher, Chancellor of the SUNY system, which captured my imagination. In talking about the need for higher education to be an anchor institution in producing a stronger economy and a stronger citizenry, Chancellor Zimpher shared the following: If cities could increase the number of college degree holders by 1%, decrease car use
by one mile per day per person, and reduce poverty by 1%, our nation would increase its wealth by $124 billion dollars. Wow.

Let’s demonstrate enlightened leadership – leadership that crosses boundaries and borders; leadership that is action-oriented and metric-driven; and leadership that makes a compelling case for increased investment in higher education.
When we think of some of the more pressing challenges facing the nation’s education system, college and career readiness stand at the forefront. We can talk about attainment goals all day but if students are not prepared to succeed at the postsecondary level, we are simply spinning our wheels. Although student effort and achievement is certainly important, we cannot fool ourselves into believe it is the students that are always failing; in many ways, our system is also failing our students. More specifically, states have a diverse set of graduation standards at the high school level, standards that do not adequately prepare students for the challenges of college-level coursework; courses sharing the same name across schools do not necessarily share the same curricula or rigor, making it difficult for postsecondary institutions to understand the preparation levels of incoming students based on high school coursework and meet student remediation and academic support needs; and many teachers are not trained to teach with a college prep focus but instead encouraged to simply move students out into the world, a trend with long-term consequences for students. This session provided an overview of the common standards initiative, presented research that further speaks to the urgency of preparation issues and can inform the standards initiative, and analyzed this national effort from various perspectives, including that of an advocacy organization and from the perspective of a former district superintendent.

Chris Minnich
Strategic Initiative Director
The Council of Chief State School Officers

The Common Core Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to develop English language arts and math standards that can be individually adopted by states and help craft a more consistent set of high school academic standards nationally. The initiative aligns evidence and/or research-based high school academic standards with college and work expectations, ensures academic standards include rigorous content and require the application of knowledge through high-order skills, builds upon strengths and lessons of current state standards, and will be internationally benchmarked so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society.

Standards Development Process

To develop the common core standards, an advisory group comprised of noted officials at Achieve, ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) came together to oversee and inform the process. Members of this advisory group thoroughly reviewed the purpose and definition of college- and career-readiness standards, drafted a new set of college- and career-readiness standards backed by research, and coordinated a dynamic and inclusive effort to seek out public comment and continual input from outside experts and practitioners. Concurrently, the development of a new set of K-12 standards followed a similar path. The final draft of college- and career-readiness standards and K-12 standards is scheduled to be released in early February. The validation committee will then meet in late February to ensure the principles that led to the development of the standards were adhered to in the development process, to offer feedback and written comments on the draft standards for consideration by work groups, and provide a review and endorsement of the standards to be released as a final report of the committee.
Adoption

Although governors from 48 states (excluding Texas and South Carolina) have signed on to the Common Core Standards Initiative, state adoption of the final standards is voluntary. Upon adoption of the common core, the organizations involved with the initiative will encourage consortia of states in the development of assessments and curricular materials. Those governors who have signed the agreement have agreed, in principle, to adopt the common core K-12 standards in ELA and mathematics within 3 years. They have also agreed to adopt the common core either in its entirety or in its entirety with up to an additional 15% added (known as the 85% rule). A state will have adopted the standards when the standards authorizing body within the state has taken formal action to adopt and implement the common core. States are responsible for demonstrating that they have adhered to this definition of adoption as outlined in the agreement.

Benefits of Adoption

The advantages of adopting the common core standards are many. The initiative ensures there will be higher, clearer, and fewer standards in place, which will benefit students, parents and teachers. Participating states will be able to benchmark across states and compare their outcomes internationally. States will have a new capacity to develop common tools and professional development strategies as a result of engaging in a common assessment system. Economies of scale will also help to bring down cost for all states involved.

To learn more about the Common Core Standards Initiative, please visit: www.corestandards.org.

Christine Tell  
Director of State Services  
Achieve, Inc.

There has been an expectations gap in effect in the United States. Historically, we have not expected all students to graduate from high school and be college- and career-ready. This is evidenced by the fact that few states require advanced math courses for graduation, state tests measure relatively low-level knowledge and skills, and high school accountability rarely focuses on graduation rates or on college- and work-readiness.

As has been addressed by Chris Minnich of CCSSO, there is an effort underway to develop a common set of academic standards in high schools across America. This initiative, however, is not entirely without precedence. Rather, states have taken actions in recent years that have provided a foundation for the adoption of the Common Core.

American Diploma Project (ADP)

The American Diploma Project (ADP) was formed by Achieve, Inc. in 2005 to try to ensure high school graduates would leave high school prepared to access and succeed in college. Prior to the ADP, few states required advanced math for graduation and there was not a coordinated and extensive commitment to aligning high school and postsecondary standards. The ADP initially had the support of governors and leaders in 13 states. Governors and leaders from K-12 systems,
postsecondary institutions, and businesses from within 35 states have now signed on to the ADP Network, representing nearly 85% of students nationally. Members of the ADP Network have made a commitment to:

- Align high school standards with the demands of college and careers
- Require students to take a college- and career-ready curriculum to earn a high school diploma
- Build college- and career-ready measures into statewide high school assessment systems
- Develop reporting and accountability systems that promote college and career readiness

Of note, more than 23 states have taken action to align their high school standards with the demands of college and careers so students can enter into credit-bearing coursework in two-or four-year colleges without the need for remediation and with a strong chance for earning credit toward their program or degree. Progress in this area also allows students to gain entry-level positions in quality career pathways. The key is to enhance rigor and alignment between K-12 and postsecondary systems. In 2005, only two states required Algebra 2. Following the creation of the ADP and the formal commitments of 35 states to improve the rigor of coursework, particularly in mathematics, state mathematics course-taking requirements increased dramatically, with Algebra 2 required in 20 states by 2009.

**Benefits of the Common Core Standards Initiative**

Evidence suggests that coordinated efforts to enhance the rigor of coursework and align K-12 and postsecondary curricula benefits students by improving student preparation and leading to greater attainment. Access is no longer the focus so much as actual readiness for college and career success. Consistent with this perspective, the Common Core Standards Initiative will allow participating states to:

- Send a common message about college preparation that will help students (and their parents and teachers) understand what is expected and allow for more self-directed learning
- Identify how Common Core Standards align with first-year college course expectations in order to better focus instruction and assessment on attainment
- Assess students’ progress toward college readiness in time to make a difference
- Collect data on student progress through the education pipeline and college access and attainment
- Train teachers, faculty and other education professionals in K-12 and higher education to focus on student proficiency and attainment
Cyndie Schmeiser
President and Chief Operating Officer of the Education Division
ACT, Inc.

ACT, Inc. has proudly played a key role in the development of the common core standards. Our organization is driven by a research agenda and we have drawn upon our research expertise to outline what research tells us about the nation’s preparation needs, to inform the Common Core Standards Initiative, and to guide the project’s future trajectory.

What Research Tells Us

Forty years ago, the United States was the undisputed leader in high school graduation rates. Of the world’s industrialized nations, the U.S. now ranks a paltry 18th out of 28 countries when it comes to the rate at which its students graduate from high school. As recently as 1995, the U.S. was tied for first in the proportion of young adults with a college degree. Now the country ranks 14th and is below average among its industrialized peers.

Further evidence that the U.S. is losing its edge globally can be found by more closely examining performance-based measures. Of 30 industrialized countries, the U.S. now ranks 25th in mathematics performance, 21st in science, 15th in reading, and 24th in problem solving. There is no question attainment statistics and performance measures reveal a downward trend in the nation’s educational sector.

Why might the U.S. be sliding downward? Research tells us students are not taking the right types of courses in high school and that courses offered do not adequately prepare students to be college- and career-ready. In 2009, only 7 in 10 ACT-tested high school graduates took a core curriculum. Of those students who took a core curriculum, only 28% were college- and career-ready in English, math, reading, and science. Overall, only 23% of ACT-tested high school graduates in 2009 were college- and career-ready in all four of these subjects.

How Research Has Impacted the Common Core

In an effort to enhance educational preparation and attainment in the United States, the Common Core Standards Initiative is being developed with the assistance of policymakers and advocacy organizations such as ACT, Inc. Drawing upon numerous sources of evidence, including college readiness data, internationally benchmarked data, high-performing state standards, and college success research, authors of the Common Core Standards are turning to sound research to create academic standards that benefit students and meet the nation’s educational needs. The following examples illustrate this:

- Research shows that 71% of high school and 78% of college instructors affirm that college and career readiness require a comparable level of knowledge and skills. However, nearly half of high school teachers report secondary teachers reduce academic expectations “a great deal” or “completely” for students whom they perceive not to be college bound. As such, the Common Core Standards are being shaped to require that college and career readiness be mandatory of all students.
Research shows that postsecondary instructors expect entering college students to have knowledge and skills that are far more targeted and specific than what high school teachers view is important. Consequently, the Common Core Standards include fewer, clearer, and higher standards.

Research shows that the level of readiness needed to enter workforce training programs and to enter college are comparable. As a result, the Common Core Standards align college and work expectations.

Research shows that performance on complex tests is the clearest differentiator in reading between students who are more likely to be ready for college and those who are less likely to be college-ready. The Common Core Reading Standards have been developed with this in mind.

Research speaks to the importance of identifying the knowledge and skills necessary for students to have a high likelihood of succeeding in college-entry, credit-bearing courses. The Common Core Standards thus include rigorous content and assess students’ higher-order skills.

In addition to informing the development of the Common Core Standards, research was also used to constantly reassess standards. When research evidence data revealed that specific standards were not essential to college- and career-readiness, standards that were initially included were removed. One such example of this is the decision to remove trigonometry functions from the Common Core Standards after performance data indicated that trig functions are not essential for student success in college algebra.

**How Research Will Continue to Impact the Common Core**

The first edition of the Common Core Standards will soon be released. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the development of the Common Core Standards is an evolving process. Future versions of the standards will be impacted by a continuing research agenda that will continue to examine the relationship of college- and career-readiness to student success. The academic research foundation will continue to shape and refine the Common Core Standards. Ultimately, research suggests that the Common Core Standards will lead more students to enroll in college, earn better grades in college, persist and graduate. Such outcomes will not only strengthen the nation’s position in the world but speak to the critical importance of research and its capacity to advance the nation’s educational goals.

**Governor Roy Romer**
Senior Advisor
The College Board

A very important movement is developing in the United States. Forty-eight of the 50 states are working together to draft a “common core” of educational standards for grades 3-8 and high school. The aim is to describe college readiness, grade by grade, and benchmark this against the better nations in the world. This will happen and will be followed by federal funds to help design and implement a common core of end-of-course exams. This is in process; it is unfinished, but it offers great promise. It will result in: a) a raising of educational standards across the board; b) an improvement of exams, both end-of-course and diagnostic (formative); c) a packaging of
standards, curricula, professional development and assessments; d) delivery of standards, curricula, professional development and assessments in a digital platform; and e) a refocus on the importance of curricula coherence and teacher quality. This is progress we must applaud and help shape.
Jack O’Connell  
California State Superintendent of Public Instruction  

Education in California has come to a crossroads, a point in time when we have the opportunity to move away from the past and into the future. This transition begins on January 19, 2010, when our state application for President Obama’s Race to the Top competition is due.

Over the course of the last few years we have seen progress in our schools. Student achievement continues to move in the right direction and we are seeing a slight narrowing of our persistent achievement gap. In summary, we are moving down the right path. That being said, Race to the Top offers an unprecedented opportunity to build on this progress and invest in a partnership between state and local educational agencies to strengthen schools and close the achievement gap.

The important point I would like to highlight is that of partnership and collaboration. We are all in this together. We all have a stake in education, including students, parents, teachers and staff, administrators, the legislature, and the governor. Of course, throughout this process there are differences of opinion and approach. But what is key is that we focus on the greater, overarching goal; and that goal must absolutely be the future of our children.

Thus far, I have been encouraged in terms of the fantastic collaboration between the California Department of Education, the Governor’s office, and the State Board of Education. The Governor’s Office and the State Board have been ready, willing, and able partners in ensuring that our application for Race to the Top is the best that it can be and that we have the greatest chance possible to secure up to $700 million for education in California. Even the California State Legislature, a body whose differences are legendary, came together last week to pass legislation that removed barriers that would have prevented California from even qualifying to apply for Race to the Top funding. I am also very pleased that nearly 800 local educational agencies have already agreed to participate in the Race to the Top reforms. This will include more than 60% of the state’s 6.3 million public school students.

Without question, Race to the Top will help California develop a highly skilled workforce, fuel future innovations, and maintain California’s standing as a global economic powerhouse. Race to the Top offers us the opportunity to strategically build upon our current efforts and invest in four key areas:

- Adopt internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- Recruit, develop, retain, and reward effective teachers and principals;
- Build data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices;
- Turn around the lowest-performing schools

These four assurance areas will serve as the basis for a new way of administering education in California.
Our diverse demographics and ongoing leadership in innovation make us a uniquely important exemplar in efforts to embrace both the challenges and the unique potential that frame the future of American education. If all of our students were educated to the high standards we have set for them, our workforce would be uniquely positioned to compete effectively in a culturally diverse global marketplace. Yet we, like the rest of the nation, struggle to ensure all of our students are adequately prepared. This is why Race to the Top is so important for us. This competition enables us all to be on the same page and adopt a singular focus in our education system on ensuring that all children learn, and learn well, at the same high level. This new system must be less hierarchical and more collaborative, student-centered rather than adult-centric, data-driven with mutual accountability at all levels, and use our expertise in all things technological for which California is known throughout the world.

This system will require that state and local educational agencies redefine their working relationships. The state role – which to date has focused too much on providing specific programs, assistance and monitoring – will become a broker of expertise, information and data. It will facilitate collaborations and the exchange of data to ensure that districts have all the resources to collect, analyze and use data to drive their work at the classroom-, school- and district-levels.

That is why we are committed at the state level to winning this competition, not just for the needed additional resources, but because those resources will help us pay for reforms that we all believe will improve student learning, close our achievement gap, reduce dropout rates and result in significantly more well-qualified college graduates. The chance to significantly enhance the educational experience of our children and more effectively match their education with the needs of the modern world is before us, and the timing could not be any better.
Previous sessions have outlined the new federal agenda and state efforts to coordinate educational standards toward enhancing student preparation and increasing the nation’s attainment rates. This final session will address how these efforts are playing out in various contexts, including that of public four-year institutions, the community college sector, within K-12 systems, and inside colleges of education, specifically teacher education programs.

Charles B. Reed  
Chancellor  
The California State University System

We can no longer maintain business as usual if we are to enhance educational attainment in the United States. As chancellor of the nation’s largest four-year college system, I have proudly overseen a number of efforts to improve higher education access and success in the state of California. Our perspective has been to make sure students in elementary and middle school are prepared to go to college, that we are helping to build a bridge between two-year and four-year institutions, and that we are engaging communities within the state to get the message out to students and families of all walks of life that college is an attainable and worthwhile goal.

Consistent with this last point in particular, CSU began a program back in 2004 called “Super Sundays” that involves doing outreach at African American churches to encourage students to take the right classes to succeed in college. We then move beyond simple words and provide opportunities for students to enhance their academic preparation. During the summers, CSU offers to pay for Algebra 1 workshops for African American students within these churches. Simply put, the ministers provide the laptops and CSU provides the faculty. Over the past three years the CSU system has seen a 12% increase year-over-year of African Americans applying to go to CSU.

Another outreach program offered by CSU is aimed at middle school students' mothers. These parents meet nine times a semester to talk about how to support their children's education. The women are eventually honored during a graduation ceremony and their children receive an ID card that allows them to use college facilities as they complete their secondary education. The outreach is meant to remind the children that if they take certain courses they can attend a CSU of their choice, and CSU is there to support them. Those of us in higher education need to get out of the ivory tower and off the campus to the real world, to where the real people and the students who are coming to America's higher education live. We must reach out to our communities if we are to enact positive change.

An additional yet critical component relates to early assessment efforts. CSU has offered an early assessment program for the last several years that lets high school students know the extent to which they are on-track academically to attend California State University. This program helps students to determine where they are and offers a roadmap for success while reinforcing the accessibility of a four-year college education in the state of California. I encourage leaders, faculty, and policymakers within four-year colleges and universities to consider these strategies as we collectively work to reach out and educate underserved populations in an effort to enhance college attainment within our states and nation.
Jack Scott  
Chancellor  
California Community College System

This is a tough time for community colleges. This past year, California’s 110 community colleges were subjected to an 8% cut in funding. This comes as demand for access to community colleges in California, which already serve nearly 3 million students, continues to increase. Because of these cuts, our resources are stretched and we are now over capacity, leading us to put students on waiting lists and delay access to critical postsecondary opportunities. If community colleges are to adequately respond to the current fiscal crisis, they must find ways of increasing productivity and efficiency. This can be done by prioritizing the curriculum, allowing for easier transfer between two-year and four-year institutions, by creating more accurate assessment tools, and by investing in technology.

First, it is important that community colleges avoid mission creep, shaping a curriculum that benefits students. There is a lot of talk about community colleges offering bachelor’s degrees, blurring the line between the two-year and four-year sector, as well as talk about community colleges offering a tremendous variety of courses. While there are certainly good arguments for any of these ideas, community colleges would be best served by recognizing what types of courses and degrees are most essential to their mission within the greater educational system and cut components that fall outside of this realm. We must do what the public asks us to do rather than allow personal and institutional ambitions to cloud our judgment and lead us to unwisely spend taxpayer money.

Secondly, we must facilitate effective transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. There needs to be greater uniformity within the transfer process that helps to eliminate wasted credit hours that do not transfer for students who have stated the intention to transfer early in the process. This will free up courses for those who need them, save students money, and move them through the system more efficiently.

In addition, we must have more accurate assessment tools at our disposal. Students need the capacity to know where they are at various points in secondary school so they know what areas in particular they need to refine in order to be college ready. Right now, 70-80% of students who come to community colleges are deficient in either English or math or both. We need to find better ways of assessing and improving basic skills competencies earlier in the process.

Finally, we must consider ways of using technology to become more efficient. In the last decade, we have made great advances by putting course catalogs online, allowing students to register for courses online, and digitizing student records. However, we do not use technology as much as we could or should. Students should have greater access to distance education. There is no reason we cannot draw upon technology to expand access and improve attainment. Hopefully, today’s fiscal crisis will motivate community colleges to become more productive and efficient, ultimately allowing us to more effectively meet the educational needs of our students and communities.
Christopher Steinhauser  
Superintendent of Schools  
Long Beach Unified School District

We must close the achievement gap if we are to meet the nation’s attainment needs and put ourselves on a path toward economic and social stability. The Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is committed to ensuring that all students will graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary and career options. Consistent with this perspective, LBUSD is establishing partnerships, programs and accountability measures toward these ends.

Public school districts cannot operate within a vacuum if they hope to succeed at enhancing the number of students who attend and complete college. LBUSD has a formal partnership in place involving both Long Beach City College (LBCC) and California State University Long Beach (CSULB) in place to improve student achievement as well as teacher quality. More specifically, this partnership, known as The Seamless Education Partnership, has allowed K-12 and its local postsecondary institutions to more effectively align their college and career preparation requirements so students and their parents are aware as of the sixth grade what is required of students to guarantee college admission to partner institutions. This partnership has also paved the way for no-cost access to students, with LBCC promising to offer students a tuition-free semester at LBCC beginning in 2011. The partnership also improves teacher quality by creating a pathway for college and university professors to annually meet with K-12 teachers, discuss and align curricula, and train teachers to better prepare students for the rigors of college. This partnership has been hailed as a model for many other districts nationwide by Eli Broad, founder of the Broad Foundation.

Furthermore, LBUSD is working to develop programs that help improve student preparation and heighten postsecondary aspirations. One such program involves pairing older and younger students within Long Beach’s high schools so students who are proficient or advanced in Algebra 2, for example, have the opportunity to teach students in Algebra 1 who need assistance. Not only does the program tutor students to enhance their math skills but it also allows better performing students to serve as positive role models for struggling students, developing more academically-focused aspirations.

Finally, LBUSD has embraced public accountability measures. The district reaches out to its community constituents, including parents and local postsecondary leaders, to set district-wide initiative goals and inform district-wide initiative efforts. Progress toward these goals is published online and available to all stakeholders. The key is to collaboratively design and assess efforts to improve education and share successes and failures externally. Accountability leads to engagement and a vested interest in collectively improving academic performance and outcomes.

Karen Symms Gallagher  
Dean  
Rossier School of Education  
University of Southern California

Teachers matter. Simply put, we need high quality teachers if we are to ensure academic success for the majority of California’s students and put the state and nation in a position to compete
economically within the world. The most important determinant of student learning is the quality of teaching. Providing excellent teachers for all classrooms should be our top priority.

A quick snapshot of California’s student performance measures reinforces this point. Between 2005 and 2009, only 38-46% of students in California were proficient in math. The percentage of students who were proficient varies widely by race/ethnicity, with only 27-36% of Latino students and 22-30% of African American students scoring at proficient levels. Only 34% of all students were college ready, a statistic that again varies by race/ethnicity, with minority student populations tending to score below average. One significant reason for these findings is an unfair distribution of underprepared teachers in schools that have high concentrations of minority and low-income students. Many teachers are also nearing retirement in California, with 100,000 teachers over the age of 50, putting less experienced teachers in these schools. On a related note, there are fewer people pursuing teaching credentials in California. Enrollees in teacher preparation programs have declined 33% in the last 5 years. This has further compounded performance issues in minority and low-income schools.

We need high quality teachers who are committed to urban education now more than ever. For the last century, the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California has prepared high quality teachers committed to high needs schools and to teaching as a career. Although the teacher preparation programs at Rossier are comprehensive, we can only graduate about 100 teachers annually. This will simply not meet the state’s educational needs. We need to scale up if we are going to make a real difference.

The Master of Arts in Teaching degree available through the USC Rossier School of Education meets this need. The “MAT@USC” program combines online learning with carefully selected field-based experiences, and provides ongoing support for new teachers, including job placement assistance and significant tuition reimbursement opportunities. During the course of the program, teachers learn how to facilitate and assess learning, become familiar with teaching principles not just strategies, and understand how to place each learner within a context that encourages teachers to draw upon a school’s available resources to harness and refine what the learner brings. The program can be completed in as little as one year on a full-time basis, or can be spread over two to three years part-time. Best of all, students may complete the online program from anywhere in the country, providing an opportunity for more teachers to be trained through focused inquiry and reflective practices. In fact, during its first year, MAT@USC enrolled 400 students. Combined with approximately 125 students on campus, we anticipate having a total of 1500 students enrolled in our teacher preparation programs by the end of 2010. If we are to place enough high quality teachers into our underperforming schools to put our nation on the right path, we must create teacher preparation programs that are interactive, informative, convenient, and accessible. We believe the MAT@USC is a wonderful example of what is possible.
After preparing for this conference and after listening carefully to our distinguished speakers, panelists, and to you, our distinguished participants, I am left with a singular impression:

Our time has come…

Now, what will we do with it?

It is clear to me today that there is more political will and more opportunity to improve education in America than at any time in decades. There are certainly enormous challenges: economic hardship; dispersed, decentralized, and dysfunctional systems; and more. We can choose to wring our hands about the problems, just as we have done for years. Or, we can get over it and get busy remaking this system by focusing on what we have heard about in the past 36 hours: focusing on completion and what it takes to get it done (and by making budget decisions accordingly), and by innovating our approaches.

Some challenge our desire to be first among the world in educational attainment as mere nationalism. I think of our task, instead, as the pivotal test of the American experiment. “Give us your tired, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free.”

Will we carry out the meaning of our great republic?

Education is the mechanism by which our ideals as a nation are realized. What did Dennis Jones tell us during his talk? He reminded us that if we did not have the racial achievement gap in our country, we would be two-thirds of the way to our goal. Let us all work together—it will take all of us at our best to seize this moment. Let us not focus on our deficits. Indeed, we asked our presenters quite explicitly to present solutions rather than rehash our challenges. Let us focus on our strengths and how to lift up those who we have yet to touch.

This conference has provided an impressive blueprint for the future.

For our part, the USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice will concentrate on three fundamental projects. First, we will initiate the College Access and Success Assessment (CASA), which will provide a tool for schools and school systems to assess the nature and effectiveness of their college-going culture. We will do this by providing an instrument that tests the environmental, attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of school cultures. Moreover, we will tie individual dimensions to actual college-going behavior. Next, we will engage with Indiana University on two national studies, one at the four-year level and another at the two-year level, of institutional efforts to boost college persistence through to graduation. Finally, we will examine
college admission and enrollment organizations, including the movement to centralize functions under a single enrollment manager, to determine institutional motivations and effectiveness.

We thank you for attending this conference and for your dedication to high quality education for all students.