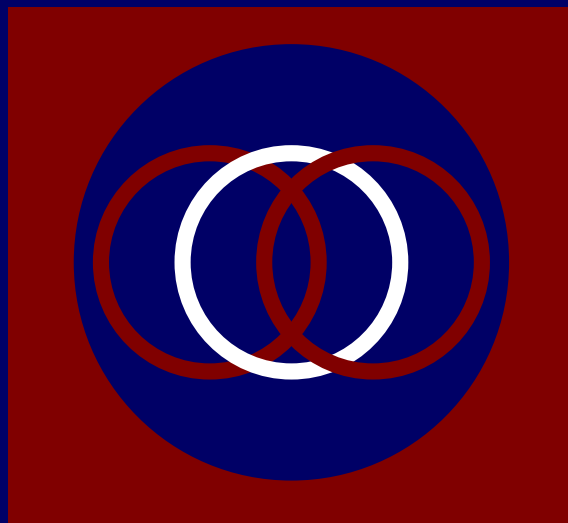# PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

**INTEGRATING LEARNING WITH LIFE AND WORK
TO INCREASE NATIONAL COLLEGE COMPLETION**

**A REPORT TO THE U.S. CONGRESS
AND SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

WASHINGTON DC

FEBRUARY 2012

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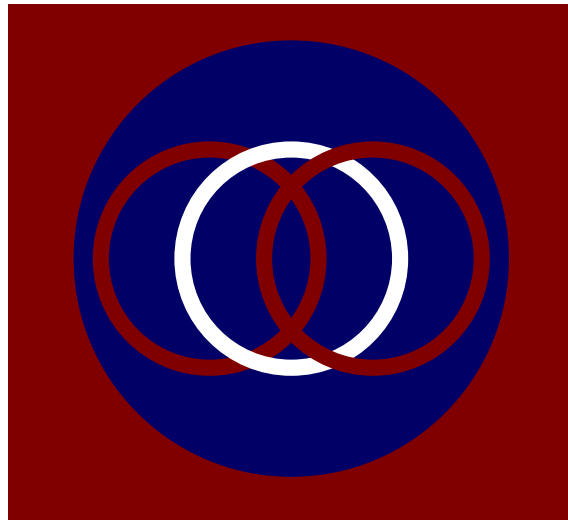

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**ADVISING CONGRESS AND THE
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**

—Since 1988—

**Advisory Committee on
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

College completion rates are stagnant or falling today, particularly among young Americans, a trend that threatens to undermine the nation's global competitiveness and further exacerbate inequality in the nation's income distribution. In the past, efforts to ensure academic quality, access, and student success in higher education have produced among the highest college completion rates in the world. Thus, reversing the current trend and increasing college completion has become an imperative at all levels of American government. At the federal level, the goal to have the world's highest rate of college completion is now front and center. Achieving this important goal by 2020 will require a formidable effort to increase the nation's college degrees and certificates.

Previous Advisory Committee reports have shown how challenging achievement of the 2020 goal will be among the nation's recent high school graduates. Complementing those reports, this effort focuses on students referred to in the past as the nontraditional population, the largest subset of students in the nation. Defining or labeling this population concisely is virtually impossible, given the considerable diversity of its demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Categorized across the dimensions of age, marital status, family size and composition, level and type of employment, and educational preparation and goals, this population – often referred to as 21st century or contemporary students – consists of many subgroups, each with unique circumstances, educational needs, and goals.

Achieving the 2020 goal among these students is an undertaking as daunting as the population is large and diverse. The task is made more difficult by two considerations. First, higher education is not structured to serve this population adequately nor are most financial aid programs. Second, unlike that for recent high school graduates, nationally representative data that tracks nontraditional college enrollment and persistence do not exist. Increasing college completion among nontraditional students must begin with careful consideration of the invaluable experience of those in higher education who have dedicated their professional lives to better integrate higher learning with the life and work of these students.

To bring these professionals together, the Advisory Committee held a hearing in Washington DC on September 30, 2011, and asked two panels of experts – state and institutional – to address three key questions of policy and practice related to adequately serving nontraditional students:

- **Barriers:** What are the primary barriers to access and persistence for nontraditional students?
- **Best Practices:** What are the most promising state and institutional strategies and policies for overcoming those barriers?
- **Federal Role:** What role should the federal government play in encouraging states and institutions to implement best practices?

Highlights of the panelists' responses at the hearing are shown in Exhibit One. The full transcript reveals a wealth of imperatives for policymakers to consider in developing a federal strategy (pages 7-65). The overriding consensus among the panelists was that increasing degree and certificate completion among nontraditional students will require modifications in the structure and delivery of higher education, as well as changes to federal student aid programs. Innovative proposals for policy and practice are highlighted throughout the transcript and summarized in **Conclusions & Implications** (pages 67-79).

The ultimate challenge for the federal government is to find ways to encourage implementation of the best of these innovative state and institutional ideas, while simultaneously increasing degree and certificate completion among recent high school graduates who have prepared for and aspire to college.

EXHIBIT ONE: HIGHLIGHTS OF PANEL DISCUSSIONS

"Overall … we have to reengage the question of whether or not our financial aid systems—as they relate to students—are fundamentally built for students who no longer exist."

Travis Reindl, National Governors Association (NGA)

"Our fundamental problem is that we don't have very good ways of measuring our fundamental product … I think the key is getting some agreement about learning outcomes and … generating more of them."

Paul Lingenfelter, State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)

"I think the federal government can do a lot more to support the creation and maintenance of open educational resources and open courseware … And we have to focus on smart regulations."

Peter Stokes, Eduventures, Inc.

"A career pathway is a series of connected educational programs and student supports that enable the nontraditional student to get the training he or she needs to secure or advance in a demand industry."

Camille Preus, Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD)

"[In our program] … we're matching a basic skill instructor along with their regular professional staff … a very, very unique program."

Scott Copeland, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)

"Encourage greater consistency and articulation to serve students … improve access to PLA through online marketing, and educating admissions, advising personnel, and faculty about the practice."

Amy Sherman, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

"Let's financially support the time faculty members spend assessing student learning apart from course delivery … [that is,] how much the participants already know about what the course is intended to teach."

Thomas Flint, Kaplan University (KU)

"It would be helpful to colleges and universities if the IPEDS database provided institutions with more accurate systems to report and track the enrollment patterns of nontraditional learners."

Chris Bustamante, Rio Salado College

"Look at a new demonstration project that focuses on innovative models like competency-based education … Support acceleration, remove the notion of seat time, and redefine the concept of faculty."

Scott Jenkins, Western Governors University (WGU)

"There may be a need for a new grant program for middle-income working students … Another idea may be to have incentives for employers to provide tuition assistance to their employees."

Javier Miyares, University of Maryland University College (UMUC)

"Spotlight best practices at all levels of higher education, not just community colleges … Promote more collaboration among all types of higher education institutions."

Thomas Dalton, Excelsior College

"Improve the general rigor of our secondary education curricula and assure much improved high school completion rates … support a federal initiative … to educate older adults in [STEM fields]."

Robert Lapiner, New York University (NYU)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

In February 2009, President Obama announced his commitment to ensure that, by 2020, the United States will once again lead the world with the highest proportion of college graduates. In the past, the U.S. has had among the highest college completion rates of all countries. However, based on the 2011 *Education at a Glance* report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), college attainment rates for young adults in the U.S. have remained relatively stagnant at around 40 percent in the recent past, while college completion among its greatest competitors has been rapidly increasing (de Vise 2011). As a result, the U.S. has been falling in rank among the share of degreed adults age 25 to 34 among developed nations (OECD 2011). In addition, a 2010 Brookings Institution report, *State of Metropolitan America*, notes that the bachelor's degree attainment rate of American 24- to 34-year-olds is now lower than that of 35- to 44-year-olds, as opposed to past trends (Berube et al 2010). Stagnant or falling degree attainment rates, particularly among young Americans, threaten the nation's overall global competitiveness and further exacerbate inequality in income distribution.

In the *Higher Education Opportunity Act* of 2008 (P.L.110-315), Congress reauthorized the Advisory Committee and charged it to provide annual reports on the condition of postsecondary access and persistence through 2014. Specifically, each annual report must contain analyses and policy recommendations regarding the adequacy of grant aid from all sources and the postsecondary enrollment and graduation rates of low- and moderate-income students. This report on nontraditional students constitutes the third annual report to Congress and the Secretary of Education. (To view the statutory language authorizing the Advisory Committee and the annual reports, see Appendix G.)

Understanding Nontraditional Students

In order to better understand the challenges inherent in meeting the President's goal, the Advisory Committee endeavored to complete a set of reports to address the access and persistence needs of students today. To accomplish this, the Committee addressed both traditional and nontraditional students, recognizing that each respective group has their own unique challenges and needs.

- **Traditional Students**. Using the ample data available for traditional students, the Advisory Committee's 2010 report, *The Rising Price of Inequality* (RPI), makes clear that substantial enrollment shifts triggered by family financial concerns are moving initial enrollment of qualified high school graduates away from four-year colleges. These shifts are significant because data have shown where students begin college largely determines their likelihood of persistence and degree completion. The findings from RPI project the loss of more than 3 million bachelor's degrees from 2000 to 2009 due to financial barriers.

- **Nontraditional Students**. RPI's findings have implications for the nontraditional student population as well. For example, financial barriers to higher education are a primary cause of part-time and delayed enrollment. Therefore, in terms of the access and persistence pipeline, traditional high school graduates who face the effects of financial barriers actually give rise to the nontraditional student population in the first place. Recognizing that nontraditional students are a growing portion of college students and are less likely to persist and complete degree programs than full-time traditional students is critical. According to a 1996 analysis from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), only 31 percent of nontraditional undergraduates with a bachelor's degree objective attained a degree within five years as opposed to 54 percent of traditional undergraduates (Horn & Carroll 1996). In addition, 38 percent of nontraditional undergraduates left school in their first year as opposed to 16 percent of traditional undergraduates (Horn & Carroll 1996). Given the alarming degree attainment trends and

projections among traditional high school graduates based on analyses from RPI, the Advisory Committee has dedicated this third annual report to addressing the challenge of degree completion for nontraditional students.

In order to understand the challenge of degree attainment for nontraditional students, the Advisory Committee conducted a literature review, convened two hearings, and used numerous meetings, presentations, and conversations with experts to gain feedback on the study. On March 17, 2011, the Advisory Committee convened its first hearing panel, which consisted of highly regarded researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. (See Appendix C for a list of the March 17 hearing panelists, including biographical information.) The discussion at the hearing addressed two main issues:

- Defining nontraditional students
- Barriers to access and persistence that nontraditional students face today

The following provides a summary of the ideas and background research for that hearing discussion in these two areas.

Defining Nontraditional Students. The historical definition of a "nontraditional" student no longer references a minority among college students today. The term was originally used to describe students who tended to delay entry to college from high school, were not from typical socially dominant groups, or were often not full-time students learning in the classroom (Schuetze & Slowey 2002). However, the change from an elite to a mass higher education system in the late twentieth century resulted in a significant increase in the number of students historically considered nontraditional, making them a majority in higher education today (Schuetze & Slowey 2002).

Despite their prominence in the student population, nontraditional students are still not adequately served in the higher education community. For example, too often institutions offer classes at times that are inconvenient for the nontraditional student, or do not make available adequate financial aid for these students, or the students themselves do not find campuses easy to navigate. In addition, nontraditional students are typically left out of national longitudinal data sets, preventing researchers from conducting useful analyses on this large and diverse student population. The lack of recognition and data on the nontraditional student population presents a serious obstacle to understanding this group in the present day.

Compounding this diminished understanding of nontraditional students is the lack of a precise or consistent definition. At least three definitions have been proposed in the literature (Kim 2002):

- **Age**. Often used as a criterion for nontraditional students is age, typically 25 and older (Kim 2002). However, age fails to acknowledge that adult students lack homogeneity regarding patterns of attendance, reasons for pursuing college, challenges, resources, etc., and that adult students are defined in varying ways by researchers, educators, and other service providers (Hughes 1983). In addition, it does not recognize that differences between nontraditional and traditional students may be attributed to factors other than age (Kim, Sax, Lee & Hagedorn 2010). Consequently, this leaves out traditional-age students who may exhibit nontraditional characteristics (Kim, Sax, Lee & Hagedorn 2010).

- **Background characteristics**. Those used to define nontraditional students can include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and first-generation and employment status (Rendón 1994). A more inclusive definition than age, background characteristics are meant to account for the

competing demands on nontraditional students from factors such as work, family, school, and culture (Rendón 1994).

- **At-risk characteristics**. Nontraditional students have also been characterized using factors that may increase their risk of attrition (Kim 2002). In a frequently cited definition used by the National Center for Education Statistics, a student is considered nontraditional if he or she exhibits any of the following characteristics:

    ♦ delays enrollment into postsecondary education
    ♦ attends part-time
    ♦ is financially independent of parents
    ♦ works full-time while enrolled
    ♦ has dependents other than a spouse
    ♦ is a single parent
    ♦ lacks a standard high school diploma (Horn & Carroll 1996).

Students are considered to be "minimally nontraditional" if they have one of these characteristics, "moderately nontraditional" if they have two or three, and "highly nontraditional" if they have more than four (Horn & Carroll 1996). In 1999-2000, 73 percent of all undergraduates had one or more of these characteristics (Horn & Carroll 1996). The nontraditional population is also expected to increase in the coming years. Between 2009 and 2020, NCES projects there will be a 21 percent increase in students aged 25 to 34 and a 16 percent increase in students aged 35 and above (Hussar & Bailey 2011).

Nontraditional students may also be described by a variety of labels and consist of many subgroups, each with unique circumstances, goals, and needs. (Please see Appendix A for examples of subgroups that comprise the nontraditional student population.) To better understand the prevalence of nontraditional undergraduates today, please view the following nationally representative data compiled by the Center for Law and Social Policy (2011): http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Nontraditional-Students-Facts-2011.pdf.

Given the lack of clarity and precision, the terms "nontraditional" and "nontraditional student" are considered problematic by both scholars and practitioners (Levin 2007). Appreciative of the various issues associated with defining a nontraditional student, the Advisory Committee will use the broadest definition available for this report to uncover all possible barriers to access and persistence that the nontraditional student population faces today. The Committee defines a nontraditional student as any student who fails to fit the traditional student template, which generally refers to an 18- to 24-year-old full-time college student. Among the students included in the nontraditional definition are not only older students, but students who may face additional challenges or barriers, e.g., foster youth, veterans, men and women on active duty, and first-generation college students.

Taxonomy of Barriers to Access. Cross's (1981) classification of barriers to participation in learning activities is often cited in the literature for nontraditional students and provides a strong framework for categorizing barriers. In addition, factors that fall into these three categories may also affect barriers to persistence. Cross's three categories of barriers are:

- Situational
- Institutional
- Dispositional

Situational barriers refer to conditions at a given time that limit the student's ability to access and pursue higher education (Cross 1981). Cost and lack of time are the most commonly cited (Cross 1981). For example, adult learners may be deterred from pursuing higher education because they lack time due to family and job commitments. Alternately, low-income and younger students may not be able to afford postsecondary education. Other conditions, such as lack of child care for single parents and transportation issues for students with disabilities, also limit the ability of students to engage in postsecondary activities.

Institutional barriers consist of practices and procedures which may discourage or exclude students from pursuing postsecondary education (Cross 1981). Barriers that fall under this category include, but are not limited to, problems with scheduling or transportation, the provision of courses that lack relevance or practicality, bureaucratic issues, the number of course requirements, and lack of adequate information about postsecondary opportunities (Cross 1981).

Dispositional barriers refer to student perceptions of their ability to access and complete learning activities (Cross 1981). For example, due to their age, older adults may have negative perceptions of their ability to learn. Students with poor educational experiences may lack interest in learning activities. Adult students, especially low-income adults, may experience low self-esteem and become concerned about how younger students will perceive them. In addition, many adults returning to complete college experience anxiety and fear because they have not engaged in postsecondary study for a period of time.

MacKeracher, Suart, and Potter (2006) also note that certain factors may fall under more than one category of barrier, depending on origin. For example, financial support can be considered a situational barrier if the student lacks access to sufficient funds to pay for their education (MacKeracher, Suart & Potter 2006). On the other hand, finances can be considered an institutional barrier when fees for admission and registration are high, institutions require students to purchase computers or other additional resources, and governments lack flexible means to provide financial support to students (MacKeracher, Suart & Potter 2006). Alternately, finances can be considered a dispositional barrier if a student believes that the cost of pursuing higher education outweighs the benefits (MacKeracher, Suart & Potter 2006).

Taxonomy of Barriers to Persistence. Bean and Metzner's (1985) model for the barriers to persistence is well established in the literature and emphasizes factors perceived to influence persistence for nontraditional students. For example, social integration, which includes factors such as extracurricular participation, school friends, and faculty contact, has not been shown through research to have as significant an impact on persistence for nontraditional students, while influences in the external environment are typically more important (Metzner & Bean 1987). Notably, the Bean and Metzner model emphasizes the external forces on a nontraditional student and deemphasizes the importance of social integration.

Bean and Metzner indicated four sets of variables as the bases of the withdrawal decision for nontraditional students. The four sets are:

- Academic Performance
- Intent to Leave
- Background and Defining Variables
- Environmental Variables

Academic performance. Students with poor academic performance, measured by a student's grade point average, are more likely to drop out.

Intent to leave. Intent to leave is affected by academic variables and psychological factors.

4

- **Academic variables**. Academic advising, study habits, absenteeism, major certainty, and course availability indirectly affect persistence through GPA, psychological outcomes, and intent to leave. For example, at the institutional level, high-quality academic advising may decrease the likelihood of attrition, while the lack of course availability may result in dropout or transfer, particularly for part-time students. Negative effects on persistence may also be based on study habits, with older students reporting longer study times than traditional-age students, or it may be based on absenteeism, which is more likely to be related to dropping out. Lastly, major certainty has a significant positive effect on persistence regardless of age or residence.

- **Psychological factors**. Both academic and environmental variables directly affect psychological factors, such as utility, satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress, which consequently affect intent to leave. For example, some students may be more likely to persist if they perceive a practical utility to their education, experience satisfaction in the student role, and demonstrate a high level of goal commitment. Stress from college requirements or the external environment, on the other hand, may negatively affect persistence.

Background and defining variables. These include age, enrollment status, residence, educational goals, high school performance, ethnicity, and gender, which often have an effect on future performance. Nontraditional students, especially those who are older, have been known to drop out at higher rates, have a part-time enrollment status, and live in a residence off campus due to family and work commitments. High school performance (as measured by factors such as high school GPA and rank) and educational goals (which can influence certainty of major, intent to transfer, goal commitment, and intent to leave) are both considered to have very strong effects on persistence.

Environmental variables. Finances, hours of employment, family responsibilities, and transfer opportunities are factors that the institution cannot control, but that have potential to pull a student away from study. On the one hand, lack of finances, having more than 20 hours of employment per week, greater family responsibilities, and more transfer opportunities have been positively associated with attrition. On the other hand, encouragement from individuals outside the institution, such as family members and an off-campus employer, has been positively associated with persistence.

In addition to the four sets of variables listed above, there are two notable compensatory effects in the Bean and Metzner model. The first suggests that environmental factors can compensate for the negative effects of academic variables. For example, students with enough family and employer support may persist despite uncertainty of major or poor advisement. Conversely, though, positive academic variables do not compensate for the negative effects of environmental factors, as family responsibilities and jobs usually come first for this population.

The second compensatory effect suggests that if a student perceives a high level of utility, satisfaction, or goal commitment, then positive psychological outcomes may compensate for the negative effects of a lower academic outcome (GPA). However, the positive effect of a high GPA does not compensate for high levels of stress or low levels of utility, satisfaction, or goal commitment.

While Cross and Bean & Metzner provide well-regarded models for barriers to access and barriers to persistence, respectively, the Advisory Committee understands that neither methodology is flawless. For example, Cross's typology focuses on the barriers associated with the nontraditional student's personal world. However, a conceptual frame for barriers broader than an individual's circumstances may be more appropriate in today's context, which could include barriers associated with governmental policy as well as community and private sector supports. Furthermore, Bean and Metzner's model focuses on older, part-time, and commuter students, which limits its applicability to a broader understanding of a

nontraditional student. Further research and analysis may be necessary to discover comprehensive models that are relevant to the present day. (Please see Appendix B for examples of barriers by subgroup in a sample of publications.)

Meeting the Challenge

Based on the literature review, conversations with experts, and findings of the March 17 discussion, the focus of the nontraditional students study shifted toward an examination of the best practices of states and institutions to improve degree and certificate completion among this population. The Advisory Committee concluded that a second hearing comprised primarily of higher education practitioners at the state and institutional levels would be the ideal approach to understanding these best practices.

Building upon the results of its first hearing on this topic, the Advisory Committee held this second hearing on September 30, 2011. Two panels of experts – six state and six institutional – addressed three questions related to the barriers, best practices, and the federal role in increasing degree completion among nontraditional students. The panelists represented a wide variety of perspectives. State panelists included seasoned practitioners as well as distinguished representatives from higher education associations and organizations with extensive knowledge on nontraditional students. The institutional panelists, comprised solely of practitioners, included the perspectives of community colleges, proprietary, public, and private universities, with both online and traditional institutions represented. (See Appendix D for a list of the September 30 hearing panelists, including biographical information.)

To supplement the September 30 hearing proceedings, the Advisory Committee issued a press release on August 29, 2011, calling for written testimony on the three questions that hearing panelists were asked to address. The Advisory Committee received submissions from ten individuals representing seven institutions or organizations. To view the press release and the submissions, please see: http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acsfa/ntswrittentestimony.pdf.

The September 30 hearing elicited a thoughtful and productive discussion. A modified transcript of the discussion comprises the second chapter of this report. For the navigational convenience of the transcript, callouts with imperatives for policy and practice are provided throughout and serve as an index to topics discussed at the hearing. As previously noted, discussion was guided by three main ideas, which are essential to understanding how to improve degree completion among nontraditional students:

- primary barriers to access and persistence for nontraditional students
- most promising state and institutional strategies and policies for overcoming these barriers
- federal role in encouraging states and institutions to implement best practices.

The consensus among panelists was that improving degree and certificate completion among nontraditional students will require changes not only in the structure and delivery of higher education, but also to federal student aid programs.

The final chapter of this report summarizes the results of the September 30 hearing discussion and its implications for federal policy. The United States currently lacks a comprehensive federal strategy for increasing college completion among nontraditional students. The following transcript provides insight into meeting the needs of these students through the knowledge and expertise of distinguished higher education representatives.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE:
A DISCUSSION WITH EXPERTS

Allison Jones (ACSFA Chair): In the past, the Advisory Committee's reports on college access and persistence have focused almost exclusively on 18- and 19-year-old high school graduates – often referred to as the traditional student population. The main reason for this focus has been the large body of nationally representative data that exist for those students. However, it is equally important for our Committee to focus on the access and persistence issues facing the rest of the student population – often referred to as the nontraditional student population. As you know, this is the larger population of students and the fastest growing. As you also know, nontraditional students face barriers to access and persistence that include the competing priorities of life and work. We will focus on those challenges today.

This fall, the Advisory Committee will deliver a report to Congress and the Secretary of Education on nontraditional students. A transcript of the afternoon session today will be used as the core of that report. The written testimony provided both by our panelists here today and colleagues in the field will also inform that report.

The afternoon session will be divided into two panels – state and institutional. We will begin with the state panel. Both panels have been asked to address the following three questions on policy and practice:

- What are the primary barriers to access and persistence for nontraditional students?

- What are the most promising state and institutional strategies and policies for overcoming those barriers?

- What role should the federal government play in encouraging states and institutions to implement best practices?

After the state panelists present their testimony, Advisory Committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Before we begin, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our very distinguished guest, Under Secretary Martha Kanter. Under Secretary Kanter, we appreciate your taking the time to join us today, and we want you to participate fully as you see fit. Please feel free to ask questions of the panelists and provide comments as the hearing progresses.

I will now turn the floor over to our new Committee Vice Chair-Elect and moderator for both the state and institutional panels, Dr. Helen Benjamin.

Helen Benjamin (ACSFA Vice Chair-Elect): Thank you very much, Allison. Good afternoon and welcome. I am very pleased to introduce our first six distinguished panelists for this very, very important topic. And, of course, as Allison has indicated, this is the state panel. Let me introduce:

- **Mr. Travis Reindl**, Program Director at the National Governors Association (NGA). Mr. Reindl oversees the postsecondary work area in the Center for Best Practices

- **Dr. Paul Lingenfelter**, President of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)

- **Dr. Peter Stokes**, Executive Vice President and Chief Research Officer at Eduventures, Inc.

- **Dr. Camille Preus**, Commissioner for the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD)

- **Mr. Scott Copeland**, Policy Associate for Student Services at the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)

- **Ms. Amy Sherman**, Associate Vice President for Policy and Strategic Alliances at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

(State panelist bios begin on page 101)

Welcome again to all of you. We are looking forward to hearing the exciting ideas you are going to share with us this afternoon about nontraditional students.

We will begin with Mr. Reindl.

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Increase Educational Attainment among Adult Learners

Identify Best Practices in Serving the Adult Learner

Travis Reindl: Thank you very much for having me this afternoon. I want to start by placing a couple of big issues on the table that governors are concerned about, which really leads us into a discussion of why it's so important to focus on what used to be called the nontraditional student, what I think the Lumina Foundation is now calling, rightly, the 21st century student because it is the norm and not the exception.

First and foremost, I think it's pretty apparent that one of the paramount concerns for governors right now is jobs. And not only job creation, which is a lot of the buzz, but job preservation. A lot of the high-paying, high-skill jobs in our economy are at risk, to be perfectly frank. To enable us to keep those jobs here in the United States, we have to have a talent pool that is equipped to take those jobs, especially in light of the impending exodus of the baby boomers. Maybe slightly delayed because of the economy, but, still, inevitable. We are all mortal, after all.

Really understanding the nature of that talent pool leads to the second big observation, which is that in more than half of our states, the 18-to-24-year-old population is not where the action is, moving forward. We are looking at a situation where there is either slow or no growth projected in that age category. So we have to reach into that 25-plus age group for not only retraining and retooling, but initial education in many cases. I'll talk in a moment about some of those strategies that we see unfolding in states. That combination of reality, the absolute need to have a strong talent pool and the absolute need to reach into that pool in an area that has not always been particularly well-served—when you look at participation and success rates among older adults in postsecondary education, it is not a pretty picture in a lot of states. You can see why governors would be so clearly interested in a policy agenda and, in some senses, best practice, around serving the adult learner. And it's particularly the working adult learner.

So there are three critical areas where governors have asked us to focus our attention and where we, in turn, engage with states and recommend

practices and gather practices. And also, in our federal relations portfolio, [we] look at ways to interact with the Department of Education (ED), the Administration, and the Congress around priorities, places where states and [the] federal [government] can reach some common cause. The first is in goal setting. Along with the President's 2020 degree attainment goal—we have goals in a number of our states regarding education attainment and boosting it between now and 2020, 2025, take your pick. The important facet that we need to keep front and center is to make explicit the role that adult learners will play in those goals because if we make it about an average and do not speak specifically to those populations that will grow in many of our states, it is very easy to continue to leave that group as an afterthought. Making very clear what our objectives are for increasing participation and success rates at all levels, from certificates to postdoctorals, is absolutely essential. We do continue to advocate for that kind of a disaggregation and focus within our states as they move to and through the goal setting process.

The second relates to how we measure progress toward and achievement of those goals. There is the old saying that if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there. As a result, the governors have asked us to invest a good deal of time and energy in the development and application of metrics that will really help us to gauge progress toward those ends. Working with Complete College America (CCA), we did develop a series of completion metrics, which were comprised both of progress and outcome measures. But the critical portion of that development, to me, was the fact that we were very cognizant of disaggregating, again, the student who is over the age of 25 and looking at, within institutions, systems of higher education, and state-wide systems, the progress, or lack thereof, that adult students are making. Where are they reaching those barriers in our higher education system? How long is it taking them to complete certificates and degrees? And to be able to tease that out because, if they are such a growth population— and we do not know where they are hitting those spots in the road that lead to attrition—we will not be able to develop the sorts of policy interventions that we need to fix the problem. Or where we see particular pockets of promise, to scale those and to support those in state policy, whether it's through regulation, or finance, or through some other means. We have been very focused, again, working in partnership with CCA. As you probably saw earlier this week, there is a group of more than half the states that are making significant progress in using those metrics. I think it's the beginning of a long process—we will learn as we go. But the point is to be much clearer and much more explicit about this particular subgroup of the overall college-going population.

The third area is policy. We can debate some particulars from state to state and area to area, but as a general observation, the way that we've wired our systems, particularly in state policy, is not necessarily completely consistent with the needs and objectives of the adult learner. There are some tweaks that have to be made. We made an effort as an organization to address this in a report that we issued in February about

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Understand the Role of Adult Learners in 2020 Degree Attainment Goals

Disaggregate, Measure, and Track Progress Made among Adult Learners

Reexamine State Policies in Light of the Needs of Adult Learners

increasing postsecondary attainment rates among adult students. [We] offered a policy framework that has four parts, that really tries to address those needs and highlights some examples, some of which are represented in this room.

The first part we have to focus on is more flexible and integrated learning environments. I think we all know that the adult learner has "life"—they have children, they have jobs, they have lots of obligations, and increasingly, parental obligations. We have to be able to design our learning environments so they have a time and place solution that allows them to make forward progress in an efficient fashion. A couple of examples that we have used consistently, and I think states are looking to consistently: in Washington State, the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Program [which] integrat[es] basic skill acquisition with training for particular skills. It brings those pieces together so that you're not sending students sequentially through adult basic or remedial education and then on to skill training. That's a path on which a lot of students often wash out. Instead [it] integrates those in a way that keeps students on track. The results really speak for themselves, at least in the initial research. Western Governors University: a growing number of states are forming partnerships with an online, competency-based, nonprofit provider. The fact that we are looking at a competency-based provider (you move at the rate at which you can command the subject matter) is a development that will have profound implications for higher education over the long term. We're just starting to see the beginning of what that will mean. It is a format that is tailored in large measure for the place-bound working adult, who is a huge part of this talent pool that we're talking about.

The second part is a bundling effect, what we called "developing comprehensive support services." Again, the adult learner has many things going on in terms of their life, particularly low-income working adults. They're often interacting with the [traditional] social services system in ways that complicate "life." You have to stop here, there, and then there, and by the time you get through it all, you've forgotten which paper goes to whom. That leads to a frustration and attrition effect for adult learners. So states like Kentucky have designed programs like **Ready-to-Work** where they integrate some Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) services provisions with community and technical colleges so that the student can bring all of their needs together in one place. There is interaction among those providers so that the student is front and center, not the process. The community and technical college system in Kentucky has graduated more than a thousand students already through this model, and I think there is further promise.

The third part, as I mentioned in the discussion of metrics, is to track performance. Specifically, we need to better integrate our education and workforce data systems within states. With funding and leadership from the federal government on this, a number of states are taking very promising and strong steps. Paul's organization—the State Higher Education Executive Officers—has done an excellent job tracking

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progress within states on that integration. But I think we could all agree that there's much more work to be done there to understand the placement rates of recent graduates, the amount of time they spend in the state, employed, after they graduate, what sorts of jobs they are taking, so that we know more about the throughput of our postsecondary and training sector.

The fourth part is finance. We can break this further into a number of subparts. I think there is an institutional part as well as a student part and a government part. When it comes to students, we need to look again at the holistic part of this. States like Wisconsin that have grants that allow for expenditure not only on the academic side of things, but on the "life" part of things—on the transportation, on the childcare, the things that will either enable or inhibit progress toward a credential. On the institutional side, we're seeing a number of states express increasing interest in linking some portion of their allocation to higher education on some measure of performance. I think that we, again, have to be explicit that performance includes the success of adult students. If we don't, we will not be signaling a value that's very critical to these states. When we look at some of our other funding opportunities in the interaction between state and federal governments, Dr. Preus, I'm sure, will describe in a second what Oregon has done to weave together various federal grant programs, all to the benefit of a cohesive career pathways approach that helps to see them through from beginning to end and get from beginning to end in particular occupational fields, harnessing those resources that you couldn't otherwise if you just kept them in segregated pools of funds.

As we look across all of this, I know the main question that you all are wrestling with is the measure of the federal role in this. I'll leave a lot of that to our lobbying department because they hate it when I start to do their job. But, overall, whether it's in the state government or the federal government, we have to reengage the question of whether or not our financial aid systems—as they relate to students—are fundamentally built for students who no longer exist. I think that is a difficult question, but I think if we're being honest with ourselves, in some respects, the answer is yes. We are missing a student who is here and basing our assumptions on a student who is not. As we [move] toward the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and other key pieces of legislation, we have to put those questions on the table and use the available evidence to guide our decisions and our discussions going forward. Thank you.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you, Mr. Reindl. And we move now to Dr. Lingenfelter.

Paul Lingenfelter: Thank you so much. Before I turn to barriers, I'd like to say just a few things about need. In 2008, our association wrote an open letter to both presidential candidates, urging them to make higher education a national priority, urging them to focus on the need for higher levels of degree attainment. Some of my members said, "OK, Paul, so we

Integrate Federal, State, and Institutional Grant Programs

Reassess the Structure of Financial Aid Systems and Programs

Make Higher Levels of Degree Attainment a National Priority

need 16 million more degrees by 2025, and we will get only 1 million from normal population growth. What makes you think that's possible?" We did a little back of the envelope analysis, which went like this: "If we increase the high school graduation rate by 10 percentage points gradually over 16 years from 68 to 78 percent, if we increase the college participation gradually over 16 years from 55 to 65 percent, and we increase the college graduation rate gradually over 16 years from 30 to 40 percent in two-year institutions and from 60 to 70 percent in four-year institutions, how many degrees will that give us?" That would give 4.3 million more degrees. That's 4.3 million out of a total of the 15 million we need. So the obvious point was to look at the adult learner. We have 8.4 million adults between the ages of 25 and 34 with some college and no degree. Those are young adults, and if half of those working adults achieved a credential, that would give us an additional 4.2 million degrees. We have another 8.8 million adults, slightly older, from 35 to 44 with some college and no degree. If we help just a third of that group complete a credential, we'd get another 2.6 million degrees. And then we have 22.7 million adults in the workforce with a high school diploma and no college. If we got just 15 percent of those to enroll and graduate, we'd have 3.4 million more degrees. So to reach the national goal for educational attainment, 30 percent of the incremental degrees can reasonably come from the traditional college age group and 70 percent must come through better education of adult students.

Occasionally, there are people who question whether we need all of this college attainment. I've found some numbers pulled together by Tony Carnevale that address this issue in a compelling way. In 1973, about the time I started my career, we had 66.4 million jobs in the United States held by people with a high school diploma or who had actually dropped out of high school. That was 66.4 million out of 91 million, 72 percent of the workforce. In 2009, we had 64 million jobs held by people with a high school diploma or less than a high school diploma, fewer than in 1973, and those people now account for 41 percent of the workforce. So in the past 35 or so years, all the job growth in this country has been for people who have some college or postsecondary associate, bachelor's or higher degree. Both the proportion of the workforce with higher levels of degree attainment and the economic rewards for having more education have expanded dramatically. The premium for having a bachelor's degree over a high school diploma now is 85 percent in lifetime earnings. So it's very clear that we have a need, and that the nontraditional student is very much a part of it.

Rather than talking about barriers, I think I'd like to say a few words about solutions that will help us get the achievement we need. The barriers will become obvious in these comments. The first solution is to end denial and accept the fact that more educational attainment is vitally important to the future of every American and to our collective future as a country.

Second, I think we need to be serious about authenticity. The tradition in higher education and in elementary and secondary education has been to

be fairly fuzzy about defining learning objectives, knowledge, and skills. We have taught students in whatever way fit local norms and the ideas of individual teachers and schools, we identified the students who were most successful, we got the percentage we thought we needed into college, and life was good. To get educational attainment at scale, we're going to have to be much more explicit and intentional about our learning objectives. To be strategic and more successful as educators, we must know what we want, we must be able to measure progress along the way, and we must learn ways of getting more of the educational attainment we seek. From this perspective, the advent of college core-based standards for college readiness, degree qualifications frameworks for postsecondary education, and much more intentional assessment of student learning and improvement of instruction are absolutely essential.

The third solution is to use limited resources more productively. One thing we have to do is assess and give credit for prior learning. And we shouldn't charge the student or the government a premium price for assessing learning that somebody else generated. Second, we need to provide efficient, convenient, coherent, well-structured learning programs for students. Such programs will require focused student effort, and will make focused student effort rewarding, not onerous and not inconvenient. We also need to end excessive time and credit for degrees. We have students who are enrolling in and achieving far many more credit hours than are required to get a degree, and students who are taking far longer than necessary. We need to focus student aid on financially needy and academically engaged students. We need to reduce expenditures where either financial need or student engagement is marginal. We need to focus student aid on institutions which serve students well, that have respectable attainment rates and legitimate, verifiable learning outcomes.

At this time in our history, the most valuable institutions will be those that generate real learning from average or disadvantaged students, not those that generate learning from those students for whom learning is, frankly, easy. The least valuable institutions are those that take the money and the time of average and disadvantaged students without yielding any real success. And that's an issue we have to confront.

Finally, what can the federal government do? At this interesting time in our history at least some of us are becoming quite critical of governmental solutions to problems. I think part of the key for both federal and state governments is to focus on what each of them can achieve effectively and well, and to divide labor among different levels of government and among institutions in a way that works together to get us toward our goals.

At the federal government level, it's highly critical that we maintain the Pell maximum award at its current level. It is the foundation for low-income students. I've always thought of Pell as the program that enables a low-income student, with part-time work, to pay the cost of living while getting a higher education. States and institutions are then

Articulate More Explicit and Intentional Learning Objectives

Focus Student Aid on Needy Students Who Are Engaged

Distinguish Between Most and Least Valuable Institutions

responsible to supplement Pell for such students to enable them to pay the cost of tuition. In too many places, Pell is being used for tuition costs, and students are not completing degrees because they are enrolling in too few courses and working too many hours.

The highest predictor I've seen for failure in nontraditional students is the inability to focus on a program of study that is close to full-time or reasonably full-time. If you take one or two courses at a time, the odds of getting anywhere fast are zero and the odds of getting anywhere at all are not much greater than zero. I think we need to define full-time study as full-time study.

The federal government can provide incentives and supports for state aid programs that encourage academic preparation and focused study. The Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) program was a well-intentioned idea that addressed an important need, but was infeasible to operate effectively at the federal level. States can do that work; some of them are doing it quite well. A federal program that encouraged states to blend financial need and incentives for academic preparation in providing student aid would be very helpful.

Finally, the federal government has a critical role to play in developing the information resources and messages that help the nation understand and focus on the need to expand educational opportunity and attainment. For almost 10 years, I've been quoting a bit of analysis produced by this Advisory Committee on the college participation rate of students who are in the bottom quartile of socioeconomic status and the top quartile of academic achievement. That kind of data needs to be available at a granular level in every state in the country. The **Common Education Data Standards** now under development are critically important to meet this need. Some important things don't require a federally managed program, but they do require federal leadership to inspire a national movement. We need a shared national agenda in order to work together in a coherent fashion on the elements essential for the educational attainment needed by traditional students and nontraditional students alike. Thank you.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you very much, Dr. Lingenfelter. Dr. Stokes?

Peter Stokes: Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for having me here today. I've said before in similar sorts of settings that nontraditional students are hidden in plain sight. And they are, literally, everywhere. By some definitions, they make up 75 percent of all of our enrollees in higher education. In many respects, the norm, as Travis mentioned earlier, really is the so-called nontraditional student. But very few institutions, or at least very few institutions that we know well, define themselves by their ability to serve nontraditional students. One other key point here at the outset is that there are, of course, a great number of diverse types of nontraditional students. There is no nontraditional student profile; there are many, many diverse types.

I want to say just a few words about the barriers [and] about some promising developments and maybe some opportunities for the federal government to have an impact, and then I'll wait for conversation to develop after that. But with respect to barriers, first and foremost, there's a poor understanding of the scope of so-called nontraditional student participation. As a consequence, we have rather weak support for these students. We also have poor recognition of the institutions that actually do serve these students. The panel that's going to come next is populated with great institutions that to one degree or another devote themselves to this, but they are too infrequently highlighted in conversations like these.

So, in part, what we need is a culture change within higher education that values and validates the nontraditional student. In the absence of that culture change, one of the key barriers is the institutions themselves. We have an institution-friendly approach to education, rather than a student-friendly approach. And that's true with respect to how we deliver programs, how we handle credit transfer, how we model our tuition pricing, and many, many other issues as well. There may, in fact, be too much emphasis on degrees as the unit of learning, and, perhaps, in particular, the bachelor's degree. There may be other credentials that are more relevant to workforce needs. There's also a significant issue around cost, and not only the cost of attending college or university, but also the opportunity cost of attending and being out of the workforce, if, in fact, that's necessary.

With respect to strategies for overcoming these barriers, more often than not, innovation tends to happen at the margins and very gradually moves toward the center of the system. I do think that the 33 states participating in the Complete College America study, which Travis referenced, "Time is the Enemy," certainly deserve some applause for their efforts, and there are a number of interesting case studies summarized in that report. But I also think that a good deal of the innovation is really happening elsewhere. Some of it, of course, is happening within institutions. And, again, I would cite the example of the institutions that are speaking later: NYU School of Continuing and Professional Studies, UMUC, Kaplan, Excelsior, Rio Salado. And, of course, Western Governors, which I'm sure you've all been hearing a great deal about over the last two years. Also private institutions, like Liberty University, which have tens of thousands of students online, or UMassOnline, which also has tens of thousands of students online. These schools are really changing the way many institutions think about serving adult students.

And, in the work that I do, working with hundreds of institutions across the country, I've certainly seen a growing interest among institutions that previously hadn't served nontraditional students to do so. Of course, that's often driven largely by a desire to increase tuition revenue. So they're trying to figure out how to do it. I think that there is also a great deal of evidence that the private sector is beginning to address problems that traditional institutions are not themselves prepared to address because of some of these cultural barriers that I mentioned. And

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Create a More Student-Friendly Approach to Higher Education

Recognize and Reward Innovation at Many Institutions

Transcend Cultural Barriers to Better Serve Nontraditional Students

**Support Creation and
Maintenance of Open
Educational Resources**

**Focus on Smart
Regulations for
Today's Institutions**

**Experiment Outside
the Credentialing Authority
Bestowed by Accreditation**

that would include companies like StraighterLine or University of the People or KNEXT and AcademyOne. These are either organizations that provide education for free, that provide education at very low cost, or that help students that want to do it themselves navigate the complex and challenging process of pulling together their prior learning assessments, pulling together their prior credits, and figuring out how they can amass their next set of credits to earn them a credential. And, again, echoing something that Travis said earlier, I think that we need to support competency-based credentialing far more than we do today. If we look at the case of Western Governors University in Indiana, we see a pretty strong case for doing that. Of course, Western Governors is now moving into Texas and Washington and presumably elsewhere in the near future.

With respect to the role that government, and federal government in particular, can play here: certainly we need more flexible financial aid for students who are studying at less than half time. We also need to do a great deal more to address transfer of credit issues. Again, if you look at the "Time is the Enemy" study, you'll see the remarkable surplus in credit earning that the average student engages in. By credential level, there's a great deal of waste there. I think the federal government can do a lot more to support the creation and maintenance of open educational resources and open courseware. Certainly, we have to do a much better job of tracking the nontraditional student, both with respect to participation and performance.

And we have to focus on smart regulations. Gainful employment is a painful concept in many respects, but it could turn out to be a tremendous competitive advantage for those institutions that are able to demonstrate it. The regulation could certainly be applied across the board to all institutions; I'm not quite sure why any institution would be exempt. State authorization is making online delivery of programs more complicated. We are working with a great many institutions who are trying to figure out how to comply. We're supporting them in their efforts to figure out their national strategies as a consequence and helping them do the paperwork. It is becoming a barrier. I also think the focus on the credit hour, at least as it is currently being defined, is a step backwards, especially as we look toward the divergent trend toward competency-based credentialing.

And I would finally add that I think we need to look for opportunities to innovate outside of the credentialing authority that's bestowed as a consequence of accreditation. Certainly, if we look at what happened in online learning over the past twenty years, where in the early '90s we might have had a few thousand students who were studying fully online, today more than ten percent of all college students are enrolled in fully online degree programs. Also, more than one in four students has taken an online course during their program of study. A big change has happened, and part of that had to do with the federal program to allow a select number of institutions to enroll more than 50 percent of their students online. It would be interesting to have an experimental program

that would allow some organizations to award degrees even without accreditation.

I'll stop there, and let's see if there are any questions later. Thank you.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you very much, Dr. Stokes. Dr. Preus?

Camille Preus: Good afternoon. I would like to start by thanking the Advisory Committee for having this hearing today. It's an important conversation, and I thank you for your leadership in convening these panels to bring attention to the issues of nontraditional students. Perhaps by the time we're finished today, we'll find another word to describe them. As Travis said, they're more the 21st century student than nontraditional.

Previous panelists have done a nice job of describing the context within which we find ourselves with a number of adults over the age of 25 who have some college, but no degree. At community colleges across the country, 40 percent of students in credit-bearing courses are over the age of 24, and nearly three-quarters of them are involved part-time. The part-time nature of nontraditional students is partially a function, which has already been said, of them having a unique life experience. And that experience sometimes stands in the way of their being successful in college. Nontraditional students tend to have less flexible scheduling, given their life or their work, or other obligations, and they are very sensitive to cost and the complexity of postsecondary education.

My comments will fall into three general categories around finance, institutional complexity, and, finally, preparation. Finance is the first barrier. It's just expensive to go to college, no matter the type of college, public or private. Having enough to start is one hurdle. Having enough to keep going and to maintain academic success is a heavy burden for students who are oftentimes not simply supporting their education, but their family. Younger students don't tend to work as much as nontraditional students—by one estimate, 13 percent of younger students versus 60 percent of nontraditional students. The work penalty that is part of the Pell Grant remains a very real problem for working students— the fact that a relatively small amount of extra earnings knocks students out of their student aid eligibility. Just as a sideline, of course, the systems expect that students are able to figure out how to fill out that Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to begin with.

Institutional complexity is the second barrier. We almost unknowingly put up barriers, or we create pitfalls, for the nontraditional student. Community colleges, nationally, spend more on instruction than other sectors of higher education. As a result, we tend to have fewer dollars for support services. Across the nation and in Oregon, we are at full capacity. Oregon community colleges grew 30 percent in the last two years, and our funding from the state has dropped an equal amount. This translates, in Oregon, to fewer counseling and advising staff, who are critical to provide the student the skills and services that they need to

Understand How Life Experience Affects Success in College

Recognize the Role of Financial Barriers to Access and Persistence

Eliminate Institutional Complexity As a Barrier to Access for Adult Learners

navigate our admissions, scheduling, and finance systems, let alone be successful at their studies. Oftentimes, our programs of study or majors in our catalogues are written as though in Latin, where an archaic meaning can only be revealed by a few. It's our job to translate that into useful information so students have a clearer path about what to take [and] when in order to be successful.

Preparation is the third barrier for the nontraditional student in community colleges. In Oregon, more than 20 percent of our overall full-time equivalents, which were 121,000 last year, represent students who are unprepared for collegiate-level work. Even though there's an astounding percent of unprepared recent high school graduates, they seem to have a leg up because they understand collegiate work, while the older student cannot transition as rapidly. In Oregon and across the nation, community colleges are transforming and redesigning our remedial and developmental programs because research, in our own experience, tells us far too many students start, but don't finish and transition out. Depending on the level of preparation, or lack thereof, nontraditional students may be using their scarce financial aid to support gaining pre-collegiate-level skills, which means they have less for their real college studies.

To the question of promising practices at the state and institutional level: in Oregon on the cost side, we do have a needs-based, state-supported financial aid program that provides aid for very part-time students. This is an important financial support for nontraditional students, but it's not enough. Programs like the one my colleague Scott will speak of in Washington called the Opportunity Grant prioritize financial supports for low-income students who are enrolled in occupational programs with high demand or high wage potential. Very promising.

Strategies for overcoming the complexity of accessing and persisting to completion [are] something that Oregon has been involved in in the last six years through our **Career Pathways Initiative**. At its heart, Career Pathways is about simplifying the path to a certificate or a degree. A career pathway is a series of connected educational programs and student supports that enable the nontraditional student to get the training he or she needs to secure or advance in a demand industry. Our goal is to increase the number of Oregonians with credentials, certificates, and degrees in those demand occupations, and to ease their transition from pre-college to credit-bearing courses.

We started with only a handful of colleges and road maps for students, but now we have it statewide and offer more than 180 career pathways. Our program completion has increased 400 percent in the last two years—as Travis said earlier, we have braided together Department of Labor and TANF dollars to ensure that students who are prepared for Career Pathways are transitioning into those programs and are successful and advancing in career pathways. And to increase nontraditional students, we have connected, by design, our career pathways to bridge courses that are designed to help those students, both traditional-age and

nontraditional, or underprepared for college level work, to bridge into collegiate-level courses. It's very important for their student success because when you braid those courses together by targeting basic skills and English language learning, that helps to enhance student success.

What role can the federal government play in these strategies? Continue to work to simplify financial aid processes and continue to maintain the Pell funding maximum. Look for ways to find financial aid for career pathways and other less-than-one-year certificates that are connected to programs of study and degrees. Use existing resources to target nontraditional, low-income, low-skill students from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), where they could support practiced research, and provide technical assistance and incentive grants that build programs linking academic and applied learning. The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) have partnered together in the past in advancing career pathways. It's an excellent example of how leveraging funds that already exist will benefit nontraditional students. More efforts like these will help make the point about how important educational attainment is. As has been said earlier, we will not accomplish the President's call to increase degrees and certificates by five million, nor will we have the thriving economy that we need and want, if we don't come together to support the success of what I'd rather call the contemporary student.

Thank you.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you very much, Dr. Preus. Mr. Copeland?

Scott Copeland: I feel I should start off with my normal Senate and House testimony: for the record, my name is Scott Copeland. I won't go that route. But I do want to thank you all for inviting me here today to speak about what we're doing in the State of Washington. I also want to thank my colleagues, who have, it looks like, set me up for some good information to give you about some innovative things we're doing in the State of Washington.

Let me first explain what our system is, and we are a system. We're 34 colleges: 29 are traditional colleges and 5 are technical colleges. Our total enrollment is about 470,000 students, and, as you've heard, a lot of community college students are part-time and that yields about 200,000 full-time equivalents (FTEs) a year within our system. We're nontraditional—that's just the name of the community colleges. Our average age, I should say the median age, is 26 and, due to the economy, less than half of our students work either full-time or part-time. We're 36 percent students of color, which is actually 12 percent higher than the State of Washington average, so we're really serving a big group there. More than half attend part-time.

Support Career Pathways and Certificates with Adequate Financial Aid

Leverage Funds to Support the Success of Contemporary Students

Gather Ideas for Innovation from Those Serving Nontraditional Students

**Adapt the Role of
Community and Technical
Colleges for Future Learners**

**Confront the
Barriers of Time, Distance,
Language, and Finances**

**Meet the Educational
Goals of Students – Whatever
Those Goals Might Be**

We saw some trends happening about a decade ago where we were realizing our demographics were shifting dramatically. If we wanted to maintain the same enrollments, we needed to look at a different direction and that is toward the nontraditional student. That was coupled with our goals as a state to increase postsecondary education and training for students who have at least a one-year certificate credential or above. This dovetails and fits nicely with what then became our initial study. Our initial study was designed to find more and better ways to reduce barriers and expand opportunities so more Washingtonians could reach higher levels of education. What the study did was provide a long-term outlook on how community and technical college education would need to change and grow to meet the needs and expectations of future learners. We really wanted to educate more people to higher levels of skill and knowledge. We also discovered, even though we have a lot of students in the community colleges, that unemployment for our state was a little over nine percent—the last report I saw from our Employment Security Department showed that we have over 60,000 jobs in the State of Washington available today, but we do not have any trained workers for those. So we're looking at some ways to try to shorten that gap.

We did find a number of barriers in this initial study: things you would guess and have probably heard numerous times about time, distance, and language. As a coastal state, we do have a lot of immigrants to the state who are struggling with the language barriers. English is not the first language, especially if they're immigrants from Asian countries. We also have students whose courses compete with their work and family obligations. And the biggest one, of course, is student finances.

We needed to find more ways to dismantle these barriers and make more of our programs accessible anytime and anywhere for our students. We wanted to make sure that our students really could enroll to meet their goal, whatever that goal was—could be high school completion, could be a certificate, could be an associate degree—and, with seven of our colleges now, could be a baccalaureate degree. We do offer applied baccalaureate programs in seven of our community colleges. We wanted to make sure they did have the skills necessary to take a lot of these unoccupied and open jobs right now and transition eventually toward baccalaureate attainment.

So what we wanted to do, and we have been fairly successful in a number of areas, we wanted to accelerate the work we were doing to make our system more user-friendly. Enrolling in college is a daunting and sometimes intimidating experience. Students need to be encouraged and supported, rather than stymied by a lack of financial aid, childcare, or transportation—we have some very rural and remote communities—or lack of access to computer technology. We wanted to make sure that the barriers of time and distance were taken care of.

We expect a lot of our students to know what financial aid means. I always tell students I've worked with that financial aid is a language that you need to be fluent in before you even begin the college process. That

kind of takes them aback a little bit, but that's something we work with our students on to make sure they have that process and understanding necessary to move on.

Once a student is enrolled, we want to make sure that they are prepared for success at the next level, whatever that next level would be, so that they didn't have to backtrack or repeat courses. We wanted to make sure that they had the personalized guidance and academic support they needed to achieve their goals. And, as you've heard already today, student services is really the piece that just gets hammered with a budget cut at either the federal or state level. That's what we try to pick up and add to in our offerings in the State of Washington.

I'm going to focus on two fairly unique programs that are going to work with our unemployed or underemployed, or, also our uneducated or undereducated, low-income students. We've been very aggressive, however, in our prior learning components with those initiatives, and I'll defer to Amy for a lot of those things happening in the prior learning areas. We've done a lot of work with our transfer students, and I'll leave that to Scott of Western Governors University in the next session. So we're always seeking other ways to move students along the pathway, to get their credential quicker and with less expensive, or, in some cases, at minimal cost.

But there are areas we've found that are successful in getting those low-income students to that first credential. One of my researchers, David Prince, worked on a "Tipping Point" study. We found that once you get that student 45 quarter credits or at the certificate level, a lot of times it provided the motivation needed to continue on, or, it also gave them enough credentialing and education to seek that employment opportunity. That was our student achievement initiative work that he did, and I'll get back to that in a minute.

I'm not sure if this was the cart before the horse, which way this went, because it almost happened simultaneously—we had tremendous support from our state legislature, specifically Representative Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney, who worked with us to put together a program called the **Opportunity Grant Program**. This is a fully funded program [in which] we could get students up to that 45 credit tipping point or credential that not only paid for their tuition and all mandatory fees that the college might have—or a program might have in addition to tuition—but also covered up to a thousand dollars a year for books, supplies, tools, as appropriate, and also provided $1,500 per FTE in wraparound services for those support pieces that we found to be very necessary for our students.

I'll get to outcomes soon, but so far, it has worked very, very well. The goal of the program is specifically putting our low-income students into high-wage, high-demand workforce programs. So somebody wants to do allied health programs, they want to be a welder, they want to go into the IT areas—that's the direction—each program at each college had to go

**Provide the Necessary
Personalized Guidance
and Academic Support**

**Take Advantage
of Tipping Points to
Spur Persistence**

**Understand the
Critical Importance of
State Grant Programs**

through an approval process to make sure it met the high-wage, high-demand for that particular community that they serve at the time. High-wage, high-demand, these things have changed a little bit, some of those fields have either evaporated or shrunk—but the high-wage piece, at least in our state, was defined as $13 per hour, with the exception of King County, which uses a $15 per hour wage rate.

The part that I like the most is that this provided a single point of contact; you have an advocate working with you. We were getting referrals from all of our work source offices, all over the place. In the community, word of mouth spread—we did not have to advertise this program; we have a waiting list of thousands of students who would like to enter. Single point of contact has been very, very helpful because that's to negotiate all the interesting steps and ladders students have to go through to progress. Advising is available—actually mandatory—and success classes, if the student needs it. And those other things that fall into place such as emergency childcare and emergency transportation. Legislation does allow that. The student doesn't have the $38 to apply for their certified nursing assistant exam—we can pay it for them. Somebody has a flat tire—we can pay for that to be fixed. The gas vouchers, whatever may be necessary. It's worked very, very well.

Tied into this one is our Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program, or our **I-BEST Program**. This works with students at the upper ends of adult basic education programs that our colleges administer. It also works with our English as second language (ESL) programs, where a student is simultaneously in the math and English that they need, while enrolled in a college/workforce program. Unfortunately, it's a very expensive program to do because we're matching a basic skill instructor along with their regular professional staff, be it a welding instructor or diesel technology, information technology (IT), whatever it may be. And they go together, they teach together, they're co-taught, and they break out if they need additional tutoring sessions and everything else. A very, very unique program that has been growing a little bit. We actually have a pilot now for academic I-BEST, so we're going to work with the academic side, not just the workforce side.

What we have discovered: there are about 400,000 working adults who do not have a high school diploma in Washington alone. So this is one way to move in that direction. There's an additional one million adults who do not have education beyond a high school diploma, so these two programs work very, very nicely.

Tied into this is the **Student Achievement Initiative**. We have become a very data-driven outcome-based system, which I'm very, very proud of. The Student Achievement Initiative became then, not only identifying 45 credits as that great mark to hit for progress—we went to a rewarding system where we took a baseline several years ago and if students are moving in a couple of different areas—if they're moving through the basic skills programs, passing pre-college writing or math courses, they've moved up to 15 credits and 30 credits of college-level

curriculum, when they complete a math course or writing course at the college level and that any completions along the way—apprenticeships, certificates, whatever—they are awarded points based on that. The colleges then are reimbursed per point, so the more you can achieve, the more you can move your students through those processes and programs, the more money your college attracts. It becomes an allocation directly from the State Board, through a general fund state process. Students are moving, colleges seem to be happy because there are dollars tied to this for their outcomes, and the Opportunity Grant Program and the I-BEST Program seem to be, right now, the biggest funders of those point totals.

What have we learned? With a little hand-holding, if you will, students can go a long way. A little bit of dollars, especially with those emergency things that come up, just life in general, can move a student a long way. We set as a target a 70 percent retention figure that we wanted schools to hit or they would lose some funding for these programs. Over 81 percent have a system for retention that's measurable by completions, through completing a certificate that's funded by the Opportunity Grant or the I-BEST Program, as well as continuing. That's about 15 percentage points higher than a similar student in a similar program who's not receiving these services. So for us, that's a significant and successful program.

The second piece we began: we do a match every year for the security office with the unemployment insurance matches to determine job placements. The first year that we had that data available was last fall for our Opportunity Grant students. And, at first, we were a little disappointed: only 25 percent received employment, almost all of it in healthcare. What we discovered: 65 percent remained in school, leaving the certificate program and going on to an associate's degree. Even though they're not in the workforce yet, they will be soon. Of that 81 percent, on average, 90 percent are either employed or continuing their education—which we find very exciting. We'll replicate that this October and look at the graduates from a year ago.

What can you do for me? I've been fighting and fighting—I had five trips to our Hill last year for our less-than-part-time state need grant program. We have it going for another year to fund these students. Because these students do not have a high school diploma (or rarely do) or a General Educational Development (GED) credential, they have probably been out of the math curriculum for 10 to 20 years in some cases. They will not pass the Ability-to-Benefit (ATB) tests that are available. What I ask you is to consider one additional Ability-to-Benefit piece: concurrent enrollment in an integrated adult basic education and college level program.

Thank you.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you very much, Mr. Copeland. Ms. Sherman?

Employ Data-Driven and Outcomes-Based Systems

Build in Employment and Job Placement Data

Broaden the Concept of Ability-to-Benefit

Deal with Dispositional Barriers Such As Fear of Failure

Confront the Transformation in Work, Media, and Entertainment

Address Mobile Students Through Better Articulation and Transfer Policies

Amy Sherman: First, I want to thank the Advisory Committee for this opportunity to participate on behalf of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). It's always hard when you're the last person on the panel; you want to say some things that are new and fresh. I just wanted to add to the barriers without repeating the ones you've heard: dispositional barriers. Often we forget that people who've been out of school for 10, 15, 20, 30 years have an issue with fear of failure, something new, or change. I think this really speaks to the need for those wraparound services and support systems to really guarantee the student will stick it out long enough to succeed.

In my brief time, I'd like to address the needs nontraditional students have as they respond to the new realities of the early 21st century. First, technology has really transformed work and learning, and the speedy advancement of new technologies has helped, as we all know, to create brand new occupational categories while making certain jobs obsolete. And this has had real implications for workers who may not have the skills or the access to learning to then readjust to that new reality. The pace of change is dizzying. Most of the new job categories require mid- and higher levels of education, and this translates into the need for individual career mobility and continual learning.

Another factor is mobility itself: sometimes moving place to place, sometimes learning through various learning institutions. We are really a very mobile society. Finally, there's a staggering amount of real time information as well as academic content accessible through new technologies. For example, I can learn all I need to know about the Civil War through downloading the lectures of Yale professor David Blight on iTunes University (iTunes U) for free. This was unheard of 10, 15, 20 years ago. Search engines can deliver information on virtually any topic.

What does this mean for higher education? Our students are living in a world of rapid change that has transformed the structure of work, media, and entertainment in profound ways, and, yet, our higher education structures have seen little in the way of transformation in response to these new realities beyond adding online learning.

In my testimony, I'd like to propose three areas in which the present structure needs rethinking. First, the higher education system must address the needs of mobile students through improved articulation and transfer policies and practices. Clifford Adelman noted in the 2006 report, "The Toolbox Revisited," that even traditional-aged students in the 1990s were on the move and attending multiple institutions. At that time, almost 65 percent attended more than one institution and 26 percent attended more than two. Incentives, through programs such as the now unfunded comprehensive program at FIPSE, should encourage greater consistency and articulation to serve students within and across state borders, including in-state and multi-state agreements. Innovative practices include common course number systems, common core curriculum, program major articulations, block credit transfers, and associate degree transfers. The practices are out there, the innovations are

out there. A good example of a state that's using most of these practices is Florida. So it can be done.

Another example is collaborations between two- and four-year institutions to credential 60 hours when students stop-out halfway through a four-year program. Texas is calling this a retroactive degree, and many states are very interested in this. We need to encourage this practice. Many states are, in fact, working on these initiatives, but we know that there are individual institutions that are very resistant to this kind of change. For example, in the 2010 report by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and Hezel Associates, they found that only seven states report using a common course number system. Think about it from the student perspective when you're trying to move between institutions and you have different numbers and descriptions—how much easier would it be for those students? Part of the challenge is due to the fact that the system is based on the credit hour: a subjectively-defined measure of learning based primarily on input, time spent with faculty, rather than on measurable outcomes. Imagine how much easier it would be for students to demonstrate their learning progress if the system-wide documentation was actually on learning outcomes.

Next, I think we need to rethink how our financial aid programs are structured. Currently financial aid supports traditional time-based, seats-in-seats learning, whether it's in the classroom or online. However, many people come to higher education with learning that has taken place—and this is college-level learning—outside of the traditional higher education structure. Think of all the learning that takes place at employer training facilities, in jobs, in the military, through a lifetime of self-study or volunteer work. Some of that experiential learning is equivalent to what takes place in the classroom, and the learning outcomes are measurable. That's important to remember: this is not giving credit for experience, but for the learning outcome.

Many colleges and universities recognize this learning and award college credit for it. This process is often called prior learning assessment or PLA. These adult learning-friendly colleges are concentrating on learning outcomes, which is what we should measure with college credit. PLA saves time and keeps the student from having to sit through classes in subjects they have already mastered. We've already heard that time and money are key barriers—why make someone take a class in a subject that they already mastered?

Yet, none of our major financial aid programs explicitly cover the costs associated with the assessment part of PLA. Currently, Pell Grants, Section 127 employer-provided educational assistance programs, veteran education benefits, and Individual Training Accounts through the Workforce Investment Act either do not allow or are unclear about whether the assessment under PLA is an allowable expense. The financial aid system and other programs are simply not structured for a

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Employ a Common Course Number System Across States and Institutions

Recognize Learning That Has Taken Place Outside Traditional Higher Education

Cover the Costs of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

**Understand the
Relationship Between PLA
and Degree Completion**

**Provide Adult Learners
with More Robust Systems of
Information and Guidance**

**Create State and
Regional School Consortia to
Provide Advising Services**

learning outcomes-, assessment-based approach to postsecondary completion.

This has implications for our nation's college completion goal: to achieve a 60 percent graduation rate by 2020. And here's why: CAEL did some research last year involving analysis of 48 institutions and over 60,000 student records. We found that adult students 25 and older with PLA credit were two and a half times more likely to persist to graduation than students without PLA credit. For example, students with PLA credits had a graduation rate for bachelor's degrees of 43 percent versus 15 percent for non-PLA students. PLA assessment generally costs less than taking courses, which translates into real savings, both for the students and for the financial aid system. Finally, our study showed that PLA students earned their degrees approximately six months faster than students without PLA credit.

Currently, PLA is generally offered on an institution-by-institution basis. There are some exceptions: Vermont and Minnesota are leaders, and there are innovations happening in states like Washington. But we found that, often, at schools that say they offer PLA, students have no way of knowing that. PLA is not marketed, and the process to access PLA is often challenging. So we need to improve access to PLA through online marketing, and by educating admissions, advising personnel, and faculty about the practice. To expand access to PLA, CAEL has launched **LearningCounts.org**, a national online PLA portal, so both schools and students can access PLA services at a low cost. CAEL is collaborating with the American Council on Education (ACE), the College Board, and many others on LearningCounts.org.

Finally, we must put ourselves in the shoes of today's nontraditional, or, as you said, contemporary learners, and ask ourselves how we can expect learners to navigate the new economy without more information and guidance. This job is mainly left up to individual institutions with some help from the workforce system. Even though we are a mobile society, there's no robust system for providing learners with this kind of information and guidance.

We're asked, what can you do? We need to support innovation in this area on a larger scale and really start thinking about it in a larger framework than an individual institution. For example, the Department of Education could establish an interactive online service based on a course database that would assist students in identifying the options to maximize transferability of their credits and the assessment of prior learning to promote degree completion. We know there are many examples out there of others who are working in this area. Perhaps the federal government could help to move that agenda.

Federal policy could also support the formation of state and regional school consortia to provide advising services, like the **Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education**, which offers a joint advising

office on an Air Force base. Advisors in the education and workforce systems could be encouraged to receive training in certificate programs on how to advise adults and other nontraditional learners. Our federal policy leaders need not view this navigational function as an add-on luxury item, but instead treat it as important as the learning itself. Without it, we're going to continue to see students waste time and money making poorly informed decisions about education through no fault of their own. As a country, we really can't afford that.

I want to thank you again for this opportunity.

Precipitate Change at Traditional Higher Education Institutions

Provide Institutional Incentives to Follow Through with Innovative Programs

Revamp State Funding to Include Outcomes-Based Measures

Q&A: State Panel

Helen Benjamin: I want to thank all of you. You have really done excellent presentations and given us much to consider. Our discussion period, however, is limited now to about 15 minutes, which is quite unfortunate.

When my congressman stops in my district to talk to educators, he will often say that we use analog methods in this digital age. That just always burns me a little bit because, I think, in some ways, it's true. You have certainly proven that we are, in many ways, at the digital age in terms of what we're doing for our students to generate real learning. And all of what you've said is quite challenging, some of it provocative. But all of it, in terms of the things we need to do, requires change. You've made the changes, you've given us great examples.

We have only a short period and maybe only one or two of you can address this: I would like you to share how you've made these changes in your areas. How do you move an institution? Because we can be so stuck in our ways of doing things. This is what Ms. Sherman is addressing: the pace of change is dizzying, and we're making ourselves dizzy trying to keep up with it. But what do we do with our people within our organizations to get where we need to get so that we can generate real learning in more of the students who come to us?

That's my only question, and then I'll yield to others on this Committee.

Scott Copeland: I'll go back to money.

Helen Benjamin: And I wanted to say, without money.

Scott Copeland: What I mean by that is to incentivize a college to actually follow through with a program. When you see the outcomes, you will see the reward to assist you—that is working well for our system. Using the Student Achievement Initiative as an example, it's very much outcome-based, but if you keep progressing, you will get more money for your budget. That's what I mean about the money part.

Amy Sherman: Just to follow on to that, I didn't mention this, but I think there's an interesting model in Tennessee. They had legislation last year, the **Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010**, and they've really revamped their funding on an outcomes-based measure, looking at completion of degrees, certificates, dual enrollment, progress with workforce training. It's fairly broad, and it's too early now to say what that's going to mean, but we need to have flexibility to encourage that kind of innovation at the state level.

Travis Reindl: The other piece of this is the involvement of individuals and constituencies outside of the political and educational realms. I'm going to make a broad generalization, so bear with me, but, as someone who's been in higher education for over 20 years, I believe that we've

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had an abusive relationship with the business community. We often ask the business community to show up and endorse our proposals at the eleventh hour with no input—to come and be our stage props. Those days have got to stop because they're the consumer.

We all benefit in terms of vibrant communities and functioning societies and democracies if we have people that have J-O-B-S. But to have that we have to have the producers of those, and not just the largest employers in a community, but the mid- and small companies where a lot of the job creation in this economy is occurring. [We need] to bring those people in at the ground level, not at the eleventh hour, and truly involve [them]. In the cases that we see in places like Oregon and Washington, the common denominator in a lot of those stories is that business is at the table early on and throughout. In conversations that we often have, the business community gets so cynical because we don't make a lot of progress very quickly, and we tend to show up at the most inopportune times. It's partly culture and habits of behavior that have got to change.

Paul Lingenfelter: Our fundamental problem is that we don't have very good ways of measuring our fundamental product. Student learning is the product, and we use credit hours as both the means of financing institutions as well as measuring what students have achieved. We don't have very good ways of knowing what it costs to generate learning. It clearly costs a different number for different students. The way we've designed our system, it's just exactly backwards: we spend the most money on the most talented students and the least money on the students who need the most help. We're not going to get everybody to the same place—we don't need everybody to be at the same place; difference is okay. But we need more student learning out of our entire population. We've got to find ways of delivering that at the institutional level, and we've also got to find public policies that support that. I'm a big fan of prior learning assessment, I'm a big fan of competency-based credentials, but we don't have common agreement on the assessments and on many things that are quite important. We do for some fields—we do a pretty good job with nurses and engineers—but not for some other things. There's just a whole range of issues that are interrelated. I think the key is getting some agreement about learning outcomes and finding a way of generating more of them.

Sharon Wurm (ACSFA Member): This question is for Mr. Reindl. You talk about the NGA and CCA completion metrics, and I think it's very important to break out the nontraditional students, the part-time students, and the older students; however, that's voluntary. There are 33 states that have volunteered to do that, but the requirement to measure completion is quite different—first-time, full-time freshmen. How would you propose to blend those so we can start considering all students?

Travis Reindl: You're absolutely right, it is voluntary. We've had a number of conversations around this town and elsewhere about what we do and the systems that the Department of Education administers, notably the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS),

Bring Business in at the Ground Level and throughout the Process

Measure Higher Education's Fundamental Product: Student Learning

Come to Agreement on Completion Metrics for All Students

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**IMPERATIVES FOR
POLICY & PRACTICE**

**Emphasize Achievement
of Credentials
Relative to Enrollment**

**Develop Common
Standards for Defining Key
Data Elements and Systems**

**Factor in Possible
Changes to Student Aid
Programs and Eligibility**

and changes that would be made moving forward. I don't have a perspective one way or the other as to whether or not we should make this sort of disaggregation part of IPEDS as opposed to pushing for 50 states to do it themselves. Our desire as an organization is to see 50 states come to a voluntary consensus and [have] this become the standard of behavior long-term because, as a general rule, ownership and compliance often yield different results with respect to sustainability, long-term, if you do it because you've decided to do it.

But it could be the streams converge, and it becomes the standard for the federal and state governments. Both the federal and state governments need to continue, one, to emphasize the ultimate achievement of credentials relative to enrollment, which is a bit of a shift from where we've been, and, two, to get better at defining who our students are, which is teasing out the adult student and looking at the performance of Pell-eligible and Pell-recipient relative to the rest of the student population. In whatever the venue, whether IPEDS or state accountability reports, emphasizing those objectives is paramount, and we can each work in our respective realms and meet when and where it makes sense.

Paul Lingenfelter: I'd like to add to that. I realized, after I finished talking when I was going through my notes, that I said "Common Core State Standards" once when I wanted to say something quite different, which is "Common Education Data Standards." There's a cooperative effort with the Department of Education, the Council of Chief State School Officers, SHEEO, and some other data-related groups to come to agreement on common standards for defining key education data elements and to develop systems at the state and school levels that would enable us to know more and sort through some of these complex issues. This is a voluntary program, but I think it's quite promising to help us have better information about education in the country.

William Luckey (ACSFA Member): Helen and I were talking about today's *Inside Higher Ed* article that reported the House has recommended eliminating Pell Grants for students who are enrolled less than half-time and limiting Pell availability to only 12 semesters. What impact, if any, do you envision this will have on the success of our nontraditional, or contemporary, students?

Camille Preus: Not to overstate, but I think it would be devastating. Using Washington and Oregon as examples, I think that eligibility needs to be broadened and not tightened in order for the contemporary student to progress to completion.

John McNamara (ACSFA Member): Even at Rockford College, a good deal of our full-time undergraduate students work so much that it takes five years almost automatically—they're working 25 to 30 hours per week while they're going to college full-time. My wife's College of New Rochelle in New York; they've had a School of New Resources for, I'd guess, about 25 years. I agree with all of you that PLA is really vital;

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we all have gifts, and we have to take advantage of and get credit for those gifts honed over years of life experience. How do the accreditation agencies fit in with that? Is there any unanimity about this?

Amy Sherman: I would say, no. But, actually, the accreditation agencies often recognize PLA with different restrictions, and I think most of them recognize CAEL's quality standards on prior learning assessment. Very early on, CAEL issued standards for quality for PLA and those are incorporated and referenced by the accreditation bodies. There are just other issues that play into things like transfer and articulation, and some of the other pieces that obviously impact PLA. It's not a national or consistent standard or framework in which the schools are operating.

Scott Copeland: We have a prior learning initiative, and Amy's been at a couple of our meetings. The **Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities** has a 25 percent cap on credit for prior learning. Some of us who are former registrars and directors of enrollment services have narrowed our definition of prior learning and only count the portfolio part, so we've been hamstrung with that. The other piece that Amy mentioned is transfer agreements. This is our 40th year with our direct transfer agreements between the two- and four-year institutions, both public and private, in the State of Washington. There is a 15 credit restriction, that's quarter credits on a 90 credit degree, on what would be the portfolio piece. We're not talking transferring credit or military credit, strictly the portfolio piece for transfer from a two-year to a four-year college.

John McNamara (ACSFA Member): What does "portfolio piece" mean?

Amy Sherman: "Portfolio" is when there's no standardized test available. For example, the American Council on Education will evaluate particular corporate and military training and give credit recommendations. "Portfolio" is when the student him or herself develops the documentation of their learning. Often they engage in a portfolio class, and it's a learning experience. That is the issue, and the concern in Washington State is how do we make sure that that kind of learning gets counted?

Helen Benjamin: With that closing comment, I will bring the state panel to a close. Thank you, again, so much for sharing your expertise with us and your experience.

**Recognize the Lack of
a Consistent PLA Standard
in Accreditation Policies**

**Ensure That Prior
Learning As Evidenced by
Portfolio Is Properly Counted**

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Allison Jones (ACSFA Chair): The hearing will come to order for the institutional panel. Helen?

Helen Benjamin (ACSFA Vice Chair-Elect): Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome back to our session on nontraditional students. Before the break, we heard the perspectives of six distinguished state experts on the barriers, best practices, and federal role in increasing degree and certificate completion among nontraditional students.

We'll now continue our discussion by hearing from six knowledgeable institutional panelists. I will introduce them now:

- **Dr. Thomas Flint**, Vice President for Regional Accreditation at Kaplan University, a for-profit, predominantly distance learning institution serving more than 70,000 online and on-campus students and dedicated to providing innovative undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional education.

- **Dr. Cristobal (Chris) Bustamante**, President of Rio Salado College, an online community college established in 1978. It is the largest of the ten community colleges in the Maricopa County Community College District in Arizona, serving approximately 70,000 students annually.

- **Mr. Scott Jenkins**, Director of External Relations at Western Governors University. Established in 1997, it is a private, nonprofit, online university serving 26,000 students across all 50 states.

- **Mr. Javier Miyares,** Senior Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness at the University of Maryland University College, which was founded in 1947. It is the largest four-year public university in Maryland and one of the largest distance learning universities, serving over 90,000 students worldwide.

- **Mr. Thomas Dalton**, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management at Excelsior College. Established in 1971, Excelsior is a private, nonprofit, regionally accredited distance learning institution, serving more than 30,000 students.

- **Dr. Robert Lapiner,** currently Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Continuing Education at New York University, has previously served as the Dean of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, a unit of New York University aimed at working professionals, serving more than 55,000 students annually.

(Institutional panelist bios begin on page 103)

So you can see from those very brief introductions that we have an incredible group of experts here, and we are looking forward to hearing what you have to say. So, welcome, and we really appreciate you taking the time to be with us this afternoon Once again, these experts have been asked to provide testimony on three questions, which I will read to you now:

- What are the primary barriers to access and persistence for nontraditional students?

- What are the most promising state and institutional strategies and policies for overcoming those barriers?

- What role should the federal government play in encouraging states and institutions to implement best practices?

Dr. Flint?

Thomas Flint: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting me to share some ideas with the Committee.

I'm going to jump right at that very first question that was outlined: what are the primary barriers to access and persistence for nontraditional students? About 30 years ago, Professor Pat Cross characterized barriers for adults in three primary categories, and it's still a very useful typology today: dispositions, situations, and institutions. In other words, the barriers can be thought of as being psychological, pragmatic, or bureaucratic. Now the psychological barriers won't take much of our time today because the role of policymaking should not be to tell students what they think about themselves.

The pragmatic barriers for adult learners have long been understood to show up in two primary arenas: in time and money. Time is a barrier, of course, because nontraditional students have so much less of it compared to the traditional 18-to-21-year-old student going to college. Most of the identified risk factors of nontraditional students perfectly fit the description of an adult learner today; that is, they're working full-time, they're attending school part-time, they have dependents or they're single parents, and they may have delayed college attendance and enrollment. In short, adult learners have real world commitments that they simply cannot avoid. Now colleges and universities can't create more hours in the day for the adult learner, but they can find ways to avoid wasting their time by being less bureaucratic. I want to share a couple of ideas related to that.

I wanted to also mention that the lack of money, of course, is a very pragmatic barrier that faces all kinds of students and that includes adult learners—it's taken some time and attention of this Committee, in fact, over the years. The Committee's June 2010 report concluded that "grant aid from all sources is not adequate to ensure the enrollment and persistence of qualified low- and moderate-income high school graduates." So the shortages of time and money intersect, actually, with the question of the institutional or the bureaucratic barriers that may face adult students. And, in fact, that's the second question for today: what are the most promising institutional strategies and policies for overcoming the barriers of access and persistence by adults?

So the good news is, there often are underutilized strategies and policies at institutions that, in fact, can create access and promote persistence because they save adults time and money. Foremost among them is a topic we've heard a little bit about from the last session, the assessment of prior learning. Prior learning assessment or PLA, is vital to adult learners returning to college. Broadly, it covers not only the experience-based learning that adults obtain from a life of work, but also transfer credits from courses taken elsewhere that adults wish to apply toward degrees.

Understand Barriers As Psychological, Pragmatic, and Bureaucratic

Account for the Real World Commitments That Adult Learners Cannot Avoid

Employ Underutilized Strategies and Policies That Promote Access and Persistence

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Account for the Impact on Savings and Completion of PLA

Meet the Pent-Up Demand for Convenient, Accredited Degree Programs

Modify Hours, Seasons, and Entry and Exit Points to Better Serve Adult Learners

The fundamental principle behind prior learning assessment is that what you know is more important than where or how you learned it. CAEL, as you heard in the last session, is an international clearinghouse of sponsored research on PLA, so I want to add a little bit of additional comment to my former CAEL colleague, Amy Sherman, who shared with you a little bit of that detail. Students who earn bachelor's degrees with PLA credits save an average of between two and a half to ten months of study, compared to non-PLA students. I believe Amy quoted the average as six months of study.

PLA students are much more likely than non-PLA students to earn a degree both at the bachelor's and at the associate's degree levels. And that is regardless of the type of institution, the student's academic ability, the student's background characteristics, or whether or not they received Title IV funds. Even in the case of the students who are not earning degrees, the PLA students were more persistent in terms of credit hour accumulation than non-PLA students, and they had higher reenrollment for multiple years of study. They kept coming back, whereas the non-PLA students tended to drop out in the first year of study. Finally, and a significant fact, is that the PLA students that were in this institutional study that Amy mentioned had higher grade point averages (GPAs) than the general college student populations.

CAEL itself has actually advocated for more than just prior learning assessment as an activity at colleges. In my prior work as CAEL's Vice President for Lifelong Learning, Policy and Research, I was the principal investigator for a study that looked at the policies and practices of high-performing, adult-serving colleges and universities. This work was called the Adult Learning Focused Institution, or ALFI, project. They identified many additional practices that address the pragmatic barrier of time, as well as in some cases, money, as it affects adult learners. And among those practices are: online learning, which we've heard a little bit about earlier today. My own institution, Kaplan University, has grown from an initial class of 34 students in three online programs back in 2001 to 70,000 students ten years later. So this growth is just one example of the pent-up demand for convenient, accredited degree programs, and we heard some other statistics earlier about nationwide, how many more students in higher education are studying online.

Another approach adopted by institutions is to have nontraditional operating hours and seasons. This helps adults because so many of them simply cannot attend daytime classes at a campus using the traditional fall and spring schedule. Many flexible colleges offer classes year-round and even on the third shift. Some have gone so far as to modify their class schedules in the middle of the term if they're serving a cohort of students whose work schedules have shifted.

Another feature is having multiple entry and exit points for the adult learners because that puts the control of their time more directly in their own hands. For example, Kellogg Community College in Michigan successfully implemented this kind of approach in certain technology

fields. They created very easy entry and exit from learning modules in which students were mastering tasks using a competency-based framework. Those students were able to earn fractional credit hours that were, nonetheless, applicable to credential programs there at the college.

Modularized curriculum is another approach. This is sometimes referred to as the block scheduling of courses on a compressed or an accelerated schedule, with more frequent turn-around times in effect between terms. There's been research that's been done at the Center for the Study of Accelerated Learning at Regis University, which has demonstrated the effectiveness of the accelerated learning format.

Finally, I also want to mention having cohort-based student tracking groups. In other words, permitting groups of students to go through a program together, not just for one course but, essentially, for all of their courses. In effect, this creates a little community and social network that not only supports learning, but also provides some on-going motivation.

So when these things are bundled together in an integrated fashion by colleges, these institutional practices can help overcome barriers of time and place and tradition that, too often, stand in the way of adult learners looking to complete programs.

From the perspective of an adult learner, not only time and money, but very often, frankly, one's ego can be put at some risk in enrolling in college because there's always the risk of failure. A key strategy now at Kaplan University to lower those risks is a new program begun this year called the **Kaplan Commitment**. The Kaplan Commitment offers students the opportunity to do five weeks of their regular academic work in their initial term of study to find out if they are practically and academically ready to undertake what they're doing. If they're not, they can exit Kaplan without any financial obligation other than their initial enrollment fee.

The initiative is designed to make sure that our students are comfortable with their chosen course of study, that they're able to adapt to the routines, that they're mindful and understand the obligations that they're undertaking, and to show us that they can handle the college-level work. We believe the program's going to boost student retention, persistence, and completion because both Kaplan and the student have to agree that, after five weeks of experience with each other, we're a good fit. As you know, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin is no fan of for-profit higher education, but at a recent Senate hearing, he praised Kaplan University for taking this unique and significant step in implementing the Kaplan Commitment.

I think this brings us to our third question of the day, and that is, what role should the federal government play in encouraging states and institutions to implement best practices? It should be apparent neither the federal nor the state governments can effectively compel institutions to adopt approaches that I've mentioned so far. I think they require genuine

Take Fuller Advantage of Accelerated Learning Formats and Student Cohorts

Provide Cost-Free Mechanisms to Minimize the Risk of Failure

Commit Fully to Student Success: Persistence and Completion

commitment on the part of colleges to find and remove every obstacle that's irrelevant, that would otherwise be a barrier to their students trying to complete programs.

In terms of actual policy leverage, federal funding through Title IV and federal regulation clearly exert enormous influence on institutions. And I think there's some room here for the federal government to help encourage institutions to implement effective practices. One positive example is the June 7, 2011, Dear Colleague Letter issued by the Department of Education providing guidance to institutions for trial or conditional enrollment periods similar to the Kaplan Commitment. This makes a positive roadmap for regulatory effectiveness and regulatory clarity that helps actually facilitate these practices at an institution.

Similarly, more can be done by federal regulations to reinforce the principle, which was mentioned earlier, that what you know ought to be more important than where or how you learned it. One case in point is the credit hour regulation, the new one that became effective July 1, 2011, and was part of the program integrity regulation package. As many of you know, that regulation starts with these 20 words: "A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement." So, in short, thinking about those words, the credit hour is a proxy for student learning. It refers to work leading to student learning outcomes. However, rather than focusing next on what methods can be used to certify that the student learning has actually been achieved, the regulation instead proceeds at length to describe the recognized means of acquiring learning at the institution.

In other words, the attention here, then, is heaped upon instructional delivery, instead of the ways of assessing and recognizing learning that's been achieved. As a result, I think, for example, prior learning assessment is being diminished. Institutions are funded, via the credit hour, for delivering courses. And course credits are the driver of tuition and fee pricing. So, the pre-college, experience-based learning of adults is not sponsored by the institution, so PLA credits are not funded under Title IV. Students who, for example, put portfolios of their learning together, that documentary evidence referred to in the last session, they have to pay out-of-pocket fees to have the colleges use their faculty to assess and value that learning as being at the college level. Those fees, by the way, might run from several hundred to thousands of dollars.

Our institutions are not paid to accept courses transferred from other institutions. Institutions are not paid under Title IV to assess entering students' knowledge, skills, and abilities, nor are they actually paid to assess those traits of their current students, except where the faculty has delivered a course of instruction to that student. Then they will assess that ability.

So, looking at the situation, part of what is paid for by Title IV funds via the credit hour in traditional course delivery would be that part of time

faculty members spend looking at the learning outcomes and looking at tests, papers, and projects in the courses they delivered and making a judgment that student work has been performed and is verified by evidence. Although the regulation only implicitly provides for it, I think the precedent in Title IV is established that college faculty should be paid for the time they spend assessing student learning, as surely as they are paid for their time spent instructing students.

To me, this represents an underappreciated opportunity. Let's financially support the time faculty members spend assessing student learning apart from course delivery. After all, instructional designers will tell us that the only proper way to design a learning experience or a course is to begin with a needs assessment. Such an initial assessment ought to measure how much the participants already know about what the course is intended to teach.

My view of why so many practices like PLA are often found at the margin within higher education is because the government, through its policy, lacks provisions to fund or incentivize those practices. Then there comes a hidden message about the lack of support; namely, those practices are not valued. And because they're not valued, they're often viewed as lacking legitimacy, which, in fact, the research would otherwise show they're entitled to have. If we can find ways to fund practices such as the assessment of prior learning, I would predict that colleges would find ways to get over internal or bureaucratic barriers to adopt better credit-recognition practices like PLA, or, even for that matter, transfer credit, that are shown to be beneficial for student persistence. If we can fund better credit recognition practices, we can quit wasting time and money in the delivery of course content and learning that students have already acquired. If we do that, we'll be promoting access and student retention and success.

Thank you for this opportunity to share those ideas.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you, Dr. Flint. Dr. Bustamante?

Chris Bustamante: Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you as well this afternoon.

As was stated, Rio Salado College is the largest college in the ten-college system of the Maricopa Community College District. We have 42,000 online learners that we educate as part of 70,000 students total. We've really worked hard to change the paradigms of scale and delivery of higher education by offering lots of multiple starts—we've got 48 start dates a year—and we've got guarantees, such as never canceling an online course, so that nontraditional students really have some exceptional options to pursue their higher education. One of the other things I want to open by saying, too, is that our institutions really need to continue to increase our efforts to focus on the student's needs, rather than the institution's needs, through these implementation strategies that work for nontraditional students.

Pay College Faculty for Time Spent on Assessing Student Learning

Find Ways to Fund Practices That Are Beneficial to Student Persistence

Change Paradigms of Scale and Delivery in Higher Education

IMPERATIVES FOR
POLICY & PRACTICE

Serve Adult
Learners Who Are
Juggling Multiple Roles

Keep College
Costs Affordable in
Multiple Innovative Ways

Address the Time- and
Place-Bound Barriers That
Nontraditional Students Face

We're all aware of the many barriers that have been stated. You've probably been listening to many of those barriers all day in terms of what those are. But in terms of my college specifically, 60 percent of our students are women who are juggling multiple roles as mothers, workers, and students. They tell us at graduation that, without us, without those flexible schedules, flexible starts, accessible pathways, accelerated course formats, they couldn't have pursued higher education and been successful.

Nontraditional learners need affordable and convenient access to courses and programs and support services, such as in-person and hybrid programs offered at locations throughout their communities, entirely online programs with 24/7 academic services such as tutoring and library services, and convenient online easy-to-access services as well. It's not enough to put a course up online without supporting it with robust student services—students won't be as successful.

Keeping tuition, fees, and textbook costs affordable are very important to reduce barriers to nontraditional students, such as: locking in tuition rates for the duration of a degree or certificate program; customizing textbooks, e-books, or utilizing course-embedded materials; offering incentive-based scholarships for successful progression through a degree or certificate program; flexible, quality, easy-to-access general course offerings that are transferrable to private and public colleges and universities, especially for those community college transfer students; and, of course, those accelerated course formats I talked about before. But also the personalized services needed for retention and intervention purposes, such as flexible online time-to-completion planning tools; orientations that are tailored to the learner and their needs; and engagement opportunities between faculty and students all help to eliminate many barriers that students face. Interventions, such as coaching and advisement, prompted by predictive modeling, and opportunities for prior learning assessment and portfolio evaluation are also important.

Some of the promising institutional strategies that we've begun employing are the 48 start dates I told you about before. Never canceling an online class, that helps students tremendously. Accelerating our 14 course-week to 8 course-week formats by a click of a button, which repopulates assignments and exams, is a result of having our own learning management system (LMS) that we've customized, in-house. The vast majority of Rio's programs are delivered entirely online in an asynchronous format in order to address the time- and place-bound barriers that nontraditional students face. And the support services are offered in a flexible and convenient manner, and in a number of delivery modes, such as email, chat, phone, and in-person. The library, tutoring, technology, and support and instructional support services provide learners with 24/7 access.

In order to personalize engagement and retention interventions, the college has developed a predictive analytic model for many of its online

courses. This model predicts, by the eighth day of class, with 70 percent accuracy, the student's likelihood of successfully completing an online course with a C or better. This allows faculty to intervene appropriately to increase student success. And the college's leverage of CRM or customer relationship management solution technology provides mass personalized student communication, to engage learners, and prompt them to persistence. Rio is also in the process of establishing a number of in-person bridge programs at locations throughout our community targeting underserved student populations. In this model, the college is providing adult learners with adult basic education and GED programming, developmental education courses, and short-term training opportunities to provide pathways into a higher wage job or into certificate or degree programs.

What we've learned from all of this is that these nontraditional students require high-touch services, especially in the early stages of their higher education pursuits. What we're looking at in the future is to be able to predict, in an orientation format with students, before they get started with our programs, pre-enrollment characteristics in a predictive model—for example, looking at their chances of succeeding in our college generally, rather than just in a course. We'd look at academic history, enrollment behavior, and pre-enrollment characteristics. The results would assist the college in predicting the likelihood of completion and developing and launching intervention strategies for at-risk students similar to what we've done in our course model.

Many nontraditional students come to the college with a much greater knowledge base than traditional-age learners. You've heard about the awarding of prior learning credit, as well as the portfolios for prior learning. In terms of accepting those, we endorse that as well. Although we don't do that very expansively, we would like to do more of that in the future. We would like to establish a course delivery model that assesses a student's knowledge and develops an individualized plan to assess their learning gaps. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation talks a lot about this, especially related to developmental education students. This eliminates the need for students to spend time and resources covering topics that they've already mastered.

Additionally, the college is working to support student success by providing a modularized and personalized orientation for students. Student success coaches and mentors are really important to engage nontraditional students, to help them succeed and access a degree completion planning tool created by the college. So we're leveraging technology and social media to build a virtual community that facilitates engagement opportunities between learners, instructors, and staff in an online environment that benefits them.

Some of the state strategies include adopting performance-based funding plans for higher education institutions, which many of the states are doing. We think it's important that these plans take into consideration the nontraditional student enrollment and completion patterns, which tend to

Establish In-Person Bridge Programs That Target Underserved Populations

Predict the Student's Likelihood of College Completion

Leverage Technology and Social Media to Build a Virtual Community of Engagement

be longer because of the enrollment status and stop-outs for these students attending school part-time. We wouldn't want institutions to be penalized for those factors in their funding process. More states should also adopt data systems to track students through their postsecondary paths at multiple institutions. This would enable us to learn more about student time-to-completion, enrollment patterns. And it would also give institutions credit for their role in a student's completion. One of the things students do with us is to bank credit up to 12 or 15 hours—that's because we have such strong transfer and articulation agreements with our public and private universities, and they can get the accessibility and flexibility they need from us by banking and transferring those credits. So we think we deserve credit for student completions in those situations.

In terms of the role the federal government could play in encouraging states and institutions to implement best practices: colleges serving nontraditional student populations struggle with how to best capture and understand their seemingly erratic enrollment behavior. And this relates to the tracking of students: It would be helpful to colleges and universities if the IPEDS database provided institutions with more accurate systems to report and track the enrollment patterns of nontraditional learners. For example, the inclusion of a category for institutions serving nontraditional students, which would consider data points such as part-time enrollment status, stop-out behavior, and enrollment patterns that would contribute to increasing knowledge about how nontraditional students are completing their educational goals.

Many of the regulations governing Title IV student aid programs are based upon more traditional delivery models and students. While the policy has been improved upon in recent years, it is still a challenge for many colleges and universities to meet the demand for flexibility presented by nontraditional learners.

The Obama Administration has set an ambitious goal to increase the number of college graduates in the U.S. by 2020, and we are very supportive of that. But it would be helpful if the federal government would develop a more comprehensive federal strategy to achieve this important goal without creating additional burdens on higher education institutions. This could include a grant program to encourage best practices or dissemination of best practices on how to address barriers to completion that, especially, nontraditional students face.

In closing, the educational opportunities provided to nontraditional students must be re-engineered to address the multiple obstacles that they encounter. We must design or redesign educational programs and services around the needs of nontraditional students, which have become the majority served by most higher education institutions in this country.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be able to contribute to this important national dialogue.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you very much, Dr. Bustamante. Mr. Jenkins?

Scott Jenkins: Thank you very much. I'm going to take the admonition from staff not to slow down the discussion. So I'm going to try and stick to seven to ten minutes, so we can have a conversation with you all.

I'm Scott Jenkins, and I'm with Western Governors University. I'm five months outside a governor's office, so I will come at this from both a state perspective and then from a promising practices at the institutional level perspective.

We've gone extensively through the process of the barriers to access and persistence, so I want to break into the institutional and state processes that show promise. To start with, I want to describe Western Governors University and why we're a bit different than a lot of postsecondary institutions. We were formed in 1997 by 19 governors who tend not to be very patient people. They were worried about the increasing cost of postsecondary education and the fact that postsecondary education was not really serving adult nontraditional learners very well. Ten to fifteen years later, it's about the same thing. The focus was to create an institution that would use technology to deliver instruction and, because of that, it was created to make it affordable, accessible, and scalable across the country. So we are nationally and regionally accredited.

We have, as was indicated, 26,000 students, and we've had 11,000 graduates to date. Of those, 4,000 graduated this year alone, so that shows you our growth, and the inflection point that this institution creates, and the needs that it is serving at this point. We have students in all states. The average student in our university is 36 years old, 70 percent are working full-time, 70 percent come from what would typically be described as an underserved student population. We award master's and bachelor's degrees only; we do not focus on associate degrees or certificates. We only award degrees in four areas of high workforce demand: information technology; healthcare, including nursing; teacher preparation, which is our largest college; and business. The teachers college at our institution has over 10,000 students and is the largest single producer of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) discipline teachers in the country.

What we've learned about adult learners, which has been said earlier today and on this panel, is they come to postsecondary education knowing different things and learning at different rates. In fact, what we know is that they actually learn different subjects at different rates. We built a higher education system in this country that ignores that, one that says you have to start in September, and you have to take 14 weeks of classes in order to get credit for that degree. At a lot of the institutions before you and Western Governors University, we take that into account. We only require students to take and pass those courses in which they don't show competency.

A lot has been said about prior learning assessment and competency-based education. Here's the way that I finally wrapped my head around

Use Technology to Deliver Instruction That Is Affordable, Accessible, and Scalable

Award Adult Learners Degrees in Areas of High Workforce Demand

Accommodate Different Rates of Learning by Student and Subject

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competency-based education, especially at Western Governors: the way we build degree programs is totally different than the way a four-year institution does it. Our courses of study are compiled by talking to business, industry, and academic leaders and asking what does a successful baccalaureate degreed graduate need to know and be able to do? Then we walk that backwards through a course of study based on competencies. So students take and pass those competencies in a self-directed way. We don't actually build any of our own content; we establish the academic competencies and then faculty go out and find the best learning resources that teach that particular competency.

Now I'll spend a little bit of time on our faculty, because we do faculty differently at WGU also. Every single student who enrolls at WGU receives what's known as a student mentor, someone who, every single week, has contact with that student and works out their course of study, the competencies they already have, where they are in their trajectory toward graduation, and then serves as everything from a guidance counselor to a learning facilitator to a nag throughout their degree program. If you come to a WGU graduation, you'll see this relationship that forms on an individual, one-to-one basis that, in a traditional university, would be hard to achieve with an individual faculty member. Our student mentors are all full-time faculty and all have at least a master's degree in the discipline in which they're teaching.

The second group of faculty at our institution are called course mentors. Course mentors are those folks who build the courses, work with our advisory councils, and find the learning resources. They also determine what the assessment will look like in which the student has to prove their knowledge—and that can be a performance, objective, portfolio, or some sort of demonstration assessment. They work with the students as they are triaged into them. Say you're an MBA student and you're having trouble with accounting. You might work with an individual course mentor to work through that particular issue. We triage the learning needs of our students to that level. Course mentor faculty are all full-time, holding at least a PhD in their discipline.

The only adjunct faculty, the third group of faculty, are those who actually assess the students. These faculty members grade the assessment the student takes and make sure that it passes at a B level or higher. So with that assessment, we don't use grades: you either pass the competency, or you go back through. Say a competency has four or five different outcomes that a student must prove. If a student passes three of those, we direct them to the resources they need, and they retake the assessment.

Because of how we've structured the course of study, students accelerate at their own pace. They can move as quickly as possible. Because of that, our students tend to graduate in 30 months, on average, as opposed to 60 months at a traditional institution.

We were formed by governors, and the idea was to create an affordable institution, so we are self-sustaining on tuition alone. We operate six month terms, students attend year-round and full-time. Every student is full-time; we do not have part-time students. At the beginning of every single month, six month terms start, so if you signed up today, you'd start at the beginning of October. It is $3,000 each term, so it's an all-you-can-learn buffet, and you move through it as rapidly as you can be assessed.

Finally, WGU students are eligible for Title IV aid, VA benefits, and Department of Defense tuition benefits and assistance. Among our students, ten percent are veterans, active duty military, or spouses of military.

Because we have that student mentor and that one-to-one relationship, on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), our students do very well. They do as well or better as students at an independent four-year institution, which we typically compare to. We also do life counseling for our students through our **WGU WellConnect Student Services**, and we made a substantial investment in e-textbooks this year, so our students wouldn't bear that higher cost. Finally, we have articulation agreements with community colleges because we believe the associate degree is a competency-based degree. If you earn that credential, we will accept it and move you into the upper division. We have over 200 articulation agreements with community colleges, and we have statewide agreements in Florida, Indiana, Washington State, and we're signing one in Texas.

What can the federal government do to help an institution like WGU? One thing I would suggest is to find a way to reward institutions or identify institutions that maintain low tuition. My first job out of college was with the Florida Student Association, and we used to say, low tuition is the best financial aid. Look at institutions that keep their costs down—that will help students in the long run.

On new regulations and new policy, pay attention to how that will roll out. On the state authorization regulation that recently rolled forth, that regulation will probably cost our institution $750,000 this year alone. In subsequent years, it will probably cost us $400,000 to make those checks. Even though that regulation may back off or stop, states have already caught wind of that and see it as a way to support a state agency.

Among other things I would suggest is to look at a new demonstration project that focuses on innovative models like competency-based education. Look at ways to support institutions, such as the one before you, that identify students using a retrieval strategy, in which you find students with partial degrees, identify, market to them, and bring them back to the institution. Competency-based and similar programs work better for that in some cases than traditional four-year institutions because in a traditional institution, courses that a student generates have expiration dates. Support acceleration, remove the notion of seat time,

Allow Adult Learners to Progress at Their Own Pace

Use Articulation Agreements with Community Colleges and Accept Associate's Degrees

Design and Implement Demonstration Projects for Innovative Models of Delivery

and redefine the concept of faculty. Issues related to IPEDS and data collection have already been discussed.

The final advice I would give is to look at decentralizing aid programs. Look at how some states have spread need-based aid dollars to institutions based on the percentage of students who need aid. They then allow those institutions to make some professional judgment decisions about how to blend and match Pell and or state need-based aid with loan aid, and with a particular student population. So provide that flexibility to institutions. And look to the ratio of tuition to the total cost of education for the student, and determine the right ratio.

And with that, I'll pass it on to my next colleague.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Mr. Miyares?

Javier Miyares: Thank you for the opportunity to address you, but, most importantly, thank you for putting the spotlight on the needs of working adults.

Just a word about UMUC: we were founded in 1947. Ever since, our sole mission has been to educate working adults. We have never enrolled traditional-age students; that has never been our market. As you may know, we have been serving the military since 1947 as well, and in 1994 we began online education. Today, we are primarily an online institution.

As was said before, one of the disadvantages of being at the tail end of the presentations is that there will be some repetition, but I think it is important for you to see the common threads among us all. It will be very important, too, to get an actual picture of who our students are: 53 percent of our students are minority, 55 percent are women, 85 percent are enrolled part-time. The median age is 32, 71 percent are working full-time, 67 percent are married, 63 percent have children, 12 percent are working single parents, 40 percent are first-generation college, 16 percent are foreign-born, 11 percent are not native English speakers. The median salary is $52,000; remember, we are located in the Washington area, which is where we have most of our enrollments. The median household income is $67,000. The average load is a little more than two courses, or 6.8 grade hours. Among our undergraduates, 92 percent are enrolled in at least one online course, and 60 percent have transferred more than 45 credit hours. And 24 percent have attended three or more institutions prior to coming to us. So we take students who have been either floating around; students who haven't been served adequately by other institutions; or, what I will mention at the end under best practices, students that come from community colleges with which we have a strong partnership, Rio Salado being one of those.

Various strategies for student success and access and persistence—these are related to who they are. I will group them into three buckets: they have busy lives, they need to get from A to B as soon as possible, and life happens to them. The first bucket refers to their busy lives. We need

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to be ready when they are. Dr. Bustamante mentioned the multiple starts—that's critical. The traditional mindset has been, if on October 1, you decide you can now go to college, too bad, you have to wait until mid-January. We need to be ready when they are. So multiple starts are critical. Obviously, online education provides the flexibility for their busy lives. As has been mentioned before, services have to be 24/7, online, and over the telephone. These are also very smart consumers. They are used to being treated like customers, and they expect to be treated like customers by us.

The second bucket is getting from point A to B as soon as possible to get the degree. That means accepting all their transfer credits, evaluating promptly those credits they are transferring, and mapping the shortest road from where they are to a degree. We must also provide credit for prior learning, experiential learning, and other tests.

The third bucket: life happens. Life happens to everybody, but to working adults, life happens more often. We have found that shorter class lengths actually lead to better success. I know it sounds silly, but shorter terms mean that there is, first, less time for life to happen, and, second, if life happens, you know you only have two weeks until you finish. We find that it's important for working adults to keep momentum—we focus on re-enrollment. Graduation will come eventually, but we have found that stopping out decreases the likelihood of eventual graduation. So, yes, they do stop-out and they come back, but we try to keep their momentum going so that they come back for the next term.

When life happens, the least we can do is not add to their problems. I remember when we had focus groups about five years ago, one student said it best, "you know, I have enough troubles in my life—when I come to school, I don't need more troubles." I think that's what they are expecting: give me an education and don't make me call three different offices and be referred to four other offices to solve the problems I have.

Barriers that could be addressed: if we are to offer multiple starts, your standard term regulations surely reduce that flexibility. In our case, we need to stop offering starts at the end of October because there is a hard stop for the term in late December. We also have now the Return of Title IV (R2T4) regulations, which penalize working students. Under that regulation, institutions need to calculate how much aid must be returned to the Department of Education if a student changes his/her enrollment. However, for institutions that have modules with multiple starts throughout the semester, at the time a student withdraws from a course, he/she must inform an institution in writing of whether or not they intend to reenroll that semester. This can be challenging for the student to determine at the exact time of withdrawal if this is due to a "life issue."

There are also new regulations on Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), which remove the flexibility an institution has in determining

Provide Flexibility to Address the Busy Lives of Working Adults

Use Shorter Class Terms to Maintain Student Momentum

Address the Barriers From Regulations That Affect Adult Students

**Create a New Grant
Program for Middle-Income
Working Students**

**Provide Incentives for
Employers to Provide Tuition
Assistance to Employees**

**Use Analytics to
Identify Patterns that
Lead to Student Success**

whether or not students will still be eligible for federal financial aid while they are working to improve their grades. Before, an institution could put a student on probation for up to a year. Now, institutions must determine if a student can regain SAP in one semester based upon a calculation of the student's potential grade point average. If the answer is no, then the student will not be eligible for aid that next semester or longer, depending upon when he/she meets SAP. That adds a barrier to our students.

Suggestions for further initiatives: first and foremost is a recognition that the national goal for degree completion cannot be achieved if we don't address the problems of working adults who want to finish a degree. There may be a need for a new grant program for middle-income working students. There are grants that have historically been effective at serving low-income students. But by and large, our students do not qualify for those grants because their income is higher—they work. That means that, to go to school, they need to load up on loans.

Another idea may be to have incentives for employers to provide tuition assistance to their employees. Many of our students, particularly at the graduate level, receive tuition assistance from their employers. That has declined because of the recession. And at the undergraduate level, tuition assistance from employers is much less likely to be the case.

As has been mentioned before, the federal data collection systems are geared to traditional students, and they provide a false picture of nontraditional institutions such as UMUC.

Best practices—I'm just reflecting from our experience. We just completed a restructuring and redesigning of our undergraduate curriculum. As has been mentioned before, we started with, what will be expected of a graduate of this program in the workplace? From there, we went to each course in that program. We also made the courses shorter in length.

We believe that analytics will become even more important; Dr. Bustamante referred to other uses of predictive models. One of the great benefits of online education is that all interactions are recorded, so all interactions can be mined. We have received a grant from the Kresge Foundation, and we are working with our two largest community colleges—Prince George's Community College (PGCC) and Montgomery College (MC)—to find the patterns that lead to success among students in community college before they come to us.

Finally, we believe that close partnerships with community colleges are critical. We believe that an institution like ours may not necessarily be the best choice for serving students who have just started higher education. They are better served at the beginning by a community college and then transferring to us. We also find that our best students, actually, are the students who come to us after they have completed 45 to 60 credit hours in a community college.

I tried to be fast. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

Helen Benjamin: You were fast. Thank you very much. Mr. Dalton?

Thomas Dalton: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to be here today.

My institution's current enrollment is about 31,000 nontraditional, post-traditional students, with an average age of 39 years old. Excelsior was established by the New York State Board of Regents. It was originally known as Regents College in 1971. We privatized in 1998, and it became Excelsior College. The college's mission is to assist those not well-served by traditional higher education. It is a leader in prior learning assessment and degree completion. I guess you've heard a lot about that this afternoon. But it is the focus of my comments this afternoon, as well as my President's (John Ebersole) written testimony.

What are the primary barriers to access and persistence? When post-traditional students are surveyed as to the factors that prevent their enrollment in graduate or undergraduate degree completion programs, the consistent response is lack of time, followed by a lack of awareness of suitable options and costs. Usually, they're in that order.

Despite the good intentions of many traditional institutions, one of the biggest barriers is a lack of alternatives to the time- and place-specific formats of those offerings aimed at post-traditional students. Evening and weekend models have been advanced over the weekday format, but are not possible for many busy working students, especially those who are in emergency care and shift workers. Their preferred method of delivery is online education.

I want to discuss cost a little bit and how it relates to Title IV aid. Cost is a major concern for many returning students, particularly those who have lost a job or have a family member who is unemployed. My background is student financial aid, and I can tell you right now, my institution has done more professional judgment this past year than I had in the 30 years combined before that, just because of economic times. Additionally, Excelsior has two large student groups: active duty military and licensed practical nurses or LPNs, with unique challenges regarding costs. Military tuition assistance has been capped at $250 per credit for several years and is now being reduced by the Navy to $200. Tuition above these levels, fees, and books are the responsibility of the student. This presents a potential hardship for both those in the lower military pay grade, and, also the LPNs that we serve.

Excelsior's associate degree in nursing is the college's largest program with approximately 14,000 students. Yet, these students cannot qualify for Title IV aid because the Department of Education's ruling is that its independent study format does not meet the criteria for the entitlement, despite its 35-year history and 40,000 graduates, as well as multiple designations as Center of Excellence in Nursing from the National

Align the College's Mission to Serving Nontraditional Students

Deliver Online Education as a Viable Alternative to Traditional Institutions

Identify the Limitations of Title IV Aid for Unique Student Groups

League for Nursing and a top school for men in nursing. Given the students' average income of less than $35,000, this is a particularly needy group and one with withdrawals at the highest rate. So you can see why putting Title IV resources into this type of learning would be a very positive thing. Most of these students are already LPNs who are trying to earn the registered nurse (RN) credential.

The unwillingness of traditional institutions to accept previously completed academic work or American Council on Education recommended credit is frequently a source of frustration and barriers to both entry and completion. CAEL has conducted research showing that those given credit for prior learning are significantly more likely to persist and graduate than those who do not receive such credit—a point that was made earlier today. This is particularly problematic with military members and their families, who move around and earn substantial credits from a multitude of institutions. They are often asked to start over or repeat previously earned credits because of institutional residency requirements.

Question two: what is the most promising state and institutional strategy for overcoming some barriers? The oldest and most proven state strategies are those of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. These three states have created institutions specifically to assist post-traditional learners to complete an undergraduate degree, regardless of state residency. The institutions Excelsior and Empire State in New York, Charter Oak in Connecticut, and Thomas Edison State in New Jersey assess prior learning, accept American Council on Education credit recommendations for military and corporate training, offer online instruction, and have minimal, if any, residency requirements. They also have sophisticated credit transfer policies that maximize the acceptance of prior coursework within approved degree frameworks. I can tell you that, in 2010, Excelsior accepted credit and transfer that would have cost students and/or taxpayers $190,000,000 if students had been required to retake those courses at our rate of $350 per unit credit.

I like to use my nephew as an example. My nephew went to college at a very traditional age and, for whatever reason, stopped out. Over time, he earned 160 credit hours with no degree to show for it. At age 28, he looked to finish his degree and when he went to traditional education, he was told that they would accept 60 of his credit hours and he'd have to take 60 more. He was able to enter Excelsior College. His credits were assessed, and he was able to take one course with Excelsior and graduate within an eight week timeframe because that course involved an eight week format. I use this as a personal experience of someone who was able to be successful earning a credential with the majority of his previous credits.

Those students thought to be most at risk with low prior GPAs, multiple transcripts, or who are lacking focus or motivation as seen in their statement of purpose are flagged for special attention by academic advisers at Excelsior, and for external coaching. Excelsior works with a

private contractor to provide life coaching to at-risk students, which includes help, time, and money management support systems with family, employers, and fellow students. It also provides study skill tips. Students are contacted by phone on a weekly basis.

Student surveys continue to find that the single greatest contributor to student success at the course level is a caring instructor. Instructors' responsiveness and comprehensive feedback are highly valued by students, regardless of the form of instruction—online or classroom. In the online environment, this includes requirements at Excelsior where weekly participation involves meaningful posting in class discussions, offering an assessment, question, or problem-solving, and condition of assignment. Research by CAEL has found that those students receiving credit for prior learning tend to complete their degrees at higher rates than those who do not. Conversely, it also found that institutions unwilling to accept prior coursework and credit or to allow for credit-by-examination are frequently a source of student frustration and loss of motivation.

Question three: what role should the federal government play in encouraging institutions to implement these practices? We should fund demonstration projects that are equivalent on the basis of both learning outcomes and graduation rates, which is a common theme heard this afternoon. Spotlight best practices at all levels of higher education, not just community colleges. Increase awareness of existing programs and practices, such as credit-by-examination, that can help post-traditional students complete an affordable degree. Encourage states to remove requirements that impede access to regionally accredited online institutions. Promote more collaboration among all types of higher education institutions to allow flexibility and allow adult students to complete degrees sooner. Extend Title IV entitlements to independent study, credit-by-examination, and prior learning assessment methods that reduce the overall cost of degree attainment to both taxpayers and the student financial aid services.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Helen Benjamin: Thank you very much, Mr. Dalton. Dr. Lapiner?

Robert Lapiner: Good afternoon—and thank you for staying put for the last speaker of the day! I'm greatly honored to have been invited to participate on today's panel. Because my prepared remarks anticipated many of the perspectives expressed so admirably by other panelists with noteworthy expertise, I'm going to take the liberty of being last by changing the prescribed direction of my presentation; doing so is made easier by being able to cite and endorse the persuasive insights and comments made by others.

First, let me add my affirmation about the seminal importance of the topics that have been considered this afternoon. The preoccupation with meeting the needs of adult learners is of incalculable importance, not just

Provide Life Coaching and Caring Instructors To Facilitate Student Success

Promote Collaboration among All Types of Higher Education Institutions

Affirm the Insights and Comments of Today's Discussion

**Align Workplace Needs
With Learning Objectives and
Academic Programs**

**Acknowledge the
Decline in Salaries for
Skilled Workers**

**Recognize the
Widening Gaps in Societal
Income Distributions**

to the individuals themselves, to their families, to the businesses and organizations and communities where they work and reside, but also to the vitality of our regional and national economies—and, not the least, to our national competitiveness.

We are living in a period in our country's history where we have to assume that there will be no increase in funding from government sources for the near term. That stark probability makes it all the more important that the needs of the workplace in the knowledge economy—which drives our globally interconnected world—are aligned with the learning objectives and the character and demonstrable quality of the academic programs that our tax dollars support—directly or indirectly—and enable our students to be successful.

I'd also like to point out a larger contextual issue and alternative perspective that I don't recall hearing today. It has become too easy a societal commonplace to push college education as an economic capacity for material well-being without acknowledging how much salaries have declined for skilled workers. One cannot responsibly talk about the "economic value" of the earning power in having a degree without considering the erosion of compensation (and opportunities) for activities that should not inherently require degree study. Yes, we all note the widening gap over the last 20-30 years between the incomes of college-educated adults and those with no higher education experience. It's not so much that the majority of college-educated adults are earning so much more; it's that the others are earning so much less.

This week the media reported what appeared to be good news. GM and Ford are now hiring again. They are doing so having negotiated with the UAW the right to engage new workers at the rate of $12 to $15 per hour, even though senior union members who had not lost their jobs and will be doing the same work as the new hires will be protected to continue to earn about $25 per hour. This news item provides vivid evidence of the declining compensation opportunities in our economy. It reminded me that when I started my life as an academic in the late 1970s, my starting salary as an assistant professor of the humanities was a respectable $13,500 per year. Yet earlier that decade, the United Steelworkers had negotiated $12 an hour for their members who worked in what was then a flourishing American industry. In other words, skilled steelworkers were able to earn more than a young Ivy League-educated PhD. That very important fact constituted uplifting evidence of how broad our notion of being a member of the middle class used to be.

Thus, when we talk about the potentially greater earnings of degree holders—and one of our panelists referenced proof of a program concept by seeing new graduates take "well-paying" jobs of $12 hour—are we looking adequately at the totality of our educational system as it relates to the evolution of our economy, and the skills and habits of mind required for the 21st century knowledge worker (to use Peter Drucker's tested phrase)? Is the educational establishment acquiescing or striving to lessen the widening gaps in the distribution of income?

Before I attempt to relate these questions to the adult learner and federal policy, let me introduce the university that I represent—New York University (NYU)—and those aspects of my direct experience that bear on these questions.

NYU is an internationally esteemed research institution, and the largest nonprofit university in the United States. It addition to its notable international ranking in a variety of fields, from mathematics, philosophy, economics and the social sciences, to the humanities, the law, finance, business, and the performing arts, in recent years NYU has become arguably the leader in reconceptualizing itself as a global network university, structured to advance and engage the globalization of knowledge and talent flows in teaching, learning, and research. Today, NYU enrolls about 45,000 degree-seeking students in its 18 constituent schools and colleges in New York and at NYU Abu Dhabi. Those numbers will expand dramatically in the future, when NYU Shanghai opens its doors next year as another complete iteration of a fully integrated global network research university.

While a very great number of NYU's graduate students are working adults, the school that has primarily served the adult learner historically is the School of Continuing and Professional Studies (or SCPS), which I had the honor to lead as dean from 2006, until I became Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Continuing Education earlier this month. Established originally in 1934 as a public service outreach arm of the University, directed primarily to non-matriculated students, NYU-SCPS has evolved considerably over its history. Most notably, the school has developed a unique capacity to capture the expertise and reflective knowledge arising within specialized industries and professional sectors where New York enjoys an exceptional concentration of national and international thought leadership. As a result, SCPS today is the principal academic home at NYU for fields of practice such as publishing in digital and print media, global real estate development and capital finance, public relations and corporate communications, graphic communications management and technology, hospitality, tourism, and sports management, credit analysis, professionally-oriented translation, and interpreting studies, philanthropy and fundraising, and the role of the private sector in global affairs. NYU-SCPS is also unique within American research universities in having its own faculty, full-time and adjunct, to teach curricula that are reserved to its departments. As a result of active advisory boards of leaders from various industries and the participation of distinguished practitioner faculty, the School's programs organically align with the knowledge and skill sets companies and organizations expect for the professionals they recruit—and hire. SCPS is presently home to 3,100 graduate students and about 1,400 undergraduates. Though a handful of programs are taken primarily by full-time traditional cohorts, overall three-quarters of SCPS's students are part-time and, with the exception of international students, about 95 percent are working, most being fully employed.

Seek Knowledge and Insight From Institutional Leaders

Capitalize and Build on an Institution's Strengths

Harness the Unique Capacities of Higher Education Institutions

(A pertinent digression: we've all agreed that the definitions we've used to describe traditional and nontraditional students do not adequately differentiate the populations who make up the 21st century student body. Even the term "working student" is misleading. At NYU, the figure for the traditional full-time population of 18-22 year old students is that 90 percent of all undergraduates work. Half hold two jobs, working more than 25 hours per week. A significant minority hold three jobs. While these numbers may be a factor of financial exigencies, they are also a result of the importance of paid and unpaid internships imbedded within the student learning experience. Students successful at getting professionally oriented jobs upon graduation often get them because of their performance as undergraduate interns.)

At NYU-SCPS, the largest single degree-seeking community is found in the Paul McGhee Division, which is the university home to undergraduate studies for adults. At McGhee, students can earn associate's and bachelor's degrees, and a growing number benefit from articulations within the school for accelerated pathways to master's degrees. Besides its 4,600 or so degree-seeking students, SCPS enrolls about 35,000 individuals (headcount) annually in rigorous non-credit professional certificates, individual courses, seminars, workshops, and conferences.

Before I came to NYU, I served another population of working adults as the dean of Continuing Education and UCLA Extension at the University of California, Los Angeles. At the time, UCLA Extension was the largest single campus, continuing education program in California, generating about 90,000 annual enrollments among 55,000 individuals. During my tenure, I also served for a while as state-wide chair of all of the nine UC Extension programs. All of the sister campuses generated approximately 450,000 enrollments each year. Though not vectors for degree completion, the UC Extension programs carry University of California credit, and enjoy deserved respect as self-standing credentials in many sectors.

The difference between California and other states on matters of credit-worthiness is worth mentioning because of its relevance to the place of adults in our institutions of higher learning. The term "non-credit" is particularly unfortunate—and misleading. Consider that within the University of California (UC) system, the majority of extension courses carry forms of academic credit, even if they are not articulated within a UC degree as such. Rather, the Academic Senate has historically accorded credit based on evidence of standards—learning goals and outcomes expressed in the curriculum, qualifications of the instructors, expectations and demonstrations for successful student performance, processes for ongoing evaluation. For most other students and certainly throughout the East, if a program isn't embedded in a degree, even if it has an evaluation assessment and correlates with professional standards, and even if students must maintain degree-equivalent grade point averages to earn a credential, the program remains "non-credit" primarily based on a narrow criterion—whether or not it fits within the host

school's degree curricula. Particularly as the badge of "non-credit" may demean the inherent rigor of the program and undervalue student learning and achievement, it contributes to the view that only degree study is self-evidently worthy of indirect support from the federal government, even when an empirical examination of curricula and expected learning outcomes may demonstrate equivalency—or even superiority—among some "non-credit" programs from institution X to "degree programs" from institution Y.

This seeming digression is germane because there is a vast population of adults in higher education who are being well-served *academically* by established university and college credit and non-credit continuing education programs—but who for the most part, are not recipients of any kind of federal financial aid (because non-degree students are generally ineligible). Yet the education they are receiving is keeping them informed and marketable and equipping them to advance—and advance in—the organizations where they work. Consequently, it is a fundamental oversight to address the question of the adequacy of federal support for adults in higher education by looking only at the population earning their first degrees. As a nation, it is vital that we expand access to learning opportunities appropriate to individual needs and societal imperatives throughout the lifespan. Earning a degree is celebrated as a "commencement" after all. And learning in a formal context as well as in self-directed ways is vital for the individual and for the productivity of the organizations where she or he applies his skills.

Similarly, worrying about national competitiveness based on how well the U.S. ranks among the proportion of our adults who have completed postsecondary degrees is a very important but also a highly reductive way of looking at the challenge. Yes, we should worry and must invest to retake our leadership. But keep in mind that most of the countries who now surpass us in the rate of postsecondary degree completion, in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) study, are not our chief competitors on the global stage; indeed, it might be comforting to point out that most are much smaller, much more culturally homogenous countries. We are not losing well-paid American jobs in large numbers because Finland, Norway, Ireland, New Zealand, and Denmark are doing better than we are in educating their citizens. The real dilemma is how much Russia, India, and China—and countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea are increasing the numbers of those attending higher education institutions, most especially in the crucial STEM fields. These nations have increased the numbers and the proportion of their large populations of secondary school graduates, and thus those eligible for college and university study. Those countries' rates of economic growth and ascension in research and technology innovation in the knowledge economy are closely mirrored in the investments they are making in educating their citizens, through comprehensive national strategies that treat investment in K-12, undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate study as an organic, carefully articulated eco-system.

Reevaluate the View that Only Degree Study is Worthy of Federal Support

Expand Access to Learning Opportunities throughout the Lifespan

Address the Increase in STEM Degree Attainment Abroad

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

That is why the U.S. must not address our challenges piecemeal, and neglect the totality of our human capital as we have done. We have to look at the complete ecology of our diverse and multi-polar education systems and better interdigitate them around critical societal needs. Regrettably, it is not clear that we have consensus about what these latter might be.

Clarify Critical Societal Needs to Inform Our Education Systems

Fifteen years of my career were spent in both government service and the private sector as an intermediary between the U.S. and other national educational systems, working with governments and institutions to create opportunities for the increased movement of students, faculty and administrators, to foster educational understanding and mutual respect, and to promote collaboration and research and the emulation of best practices. It was an uplifting period of my life: The U.S. was the model for the world in the quality of our institutions and the breadth of access that our diverse systems of higher education made possible.

Fast forward two decades later, and it has become a worrisome irony that in 2011, U.S. institutions are eagerly seeking to expand their market share of highly qualified students from abroad, not just because of their academic prowess and the rich, cross-cultural perspectives they will bring, but disproportionally because of the infusion of revenue they represent: they're self-funding. And, how are we remedying that our native population represents a rapidly declining percentage of the world's educated classes, as the OECD's "Education at a Glance 2011" report vividly documents? (In 2009, among baby boomers aged 55-64, U.S. degree holders represented nearly 36% of the global population for that age cohort, but for the population of 25-34, that proportion shrank to 20.5%. Our standing is certain to slip further, just compared to China alone: nearly 37% of its high school graduates entered college, nearly three times the rate of the U.S. And because of its vast population, that means that China now has four times the numbers of students graduating from high school as the U.S.)

Remedy the Decline in U.S. Students among the World's Educated Classes

Establish the Desired Outcomes from the Degree Completion Goal

Consequently, when we talk about our concern for a class of students—adults in higher education—we must think about what they represent about our place in the world and our future. The goal of increasing the numbers of adults with postsecondary education credentials, degrees, and/or certificate studies, as everyone has said, is absolutely an economic, political, social, and moral imperative. But what are the outcomes for them that we have in mind? What is the relative value of an associate's or a bachelor's degree from institution to institution? What are the equivalencies among programs? Do we know how professionally oriented, practice-focused credentials are valued by the fields and industries that seek knowledge workers? We've heard many wonderful examples of the practices of institutions that are represented in this panel. Earlier this afternoon we heard about programs in Oregon and Washington and their state-based industries; but do their credentials have credibility for employers in California or Michigan? Will an adult-oriented credential earned in Eugene or Tacoma count for a job in San Jose or Grand Rapids? Given the place science and technology

innovation hold as the engines of our economy, there's also the large question of—and this is a preoccupation that we have at NYU for our undergraduate degree completion program—the place of scientific and mathematical literacy and independent critical thinking and analytical skills in all of our curricula, including professionally-focused degrees for adults. In light of the rapid pace of change in technology, regulatory frameworks, and social and digital media and their creative and disruptive impacts on all fields of activity, is it prudent public policy to treat all degree programs as inherently equally worthy of indirect support? Are we advocating narrowly preparing students for the first credential only? Or to equip them with the skills to be lifelong learners and to continue to know how to evolve after the completion of their undergraduate credentials, as hard-won as these latter might be?

These last questions are particularly salient to my institution and to the field of university continuing education as a whole. And they are important to our students. What I have observed among our most successful adult learners, those returning to or beginning undergraduate study between the ages of 25 and 40, is that they are not just in a hurry to catch up and earn a credential—they want to get ahead through further study. They are eager to make up for lost time, and get on track for further graduate or professional studies. At NYU-SCPS, the McGhee program statistics are remarkable in some ways. Although we are proud that our degree completion rates appear to be about two and a half times better than the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported national institutional average, they are not up to the degree completion rates of traditional cohorts in our university—though we are making progress every year. Where McGhee compares favorably is among those who do cross the finish line: about 25 percent of our students upon graduation go on for further professional and graduate study, including those who are over 50. And nearly all return for some form of "non-credit" continuing education, if not with us, with other institutions. Our faculty takes pride in the evidence that our students learn that completing their degrees is not the end point, but properly understood as a commencement.

Knowledge isn't static. Students internalize that being educated—whether in professional fields or the liberal arts—is more than acquiring marketable skills. It produces habits of mind that require a willingness to continue and enable forms of higher learning throughout life. Yet, while we may be preparing our students to become continuing learners—a commitment to remain educated across new career paths and transformations in the world of work—they are likely to have to face that future without expectations of any kind of future federal or state support. It's a safe bet that we're not going to see an increase in tax revenue-generated funding adequate to the need of educating our population as broadly and deeply as we should expect. There's going to be a predictable contraction of support and competition for resources, at least in the near term.

**Equip Students
to Become
Lifelong Learners**

**Prepare Adult
Learners to Pursue
Advanced Degrees**

**Confront the
Contraction of Funding
for Higher Education**

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Invest in Education for All Citizens Regardless of Age

Mandate a College Preparatory Curriculum in High School

Empower Community Colleges to Be the Engine of Degree Completion

And yet as so many other panelists have documented, in the present structure of support for adult students, it is a matter of fact that there is inequitable treatment: Even if the individual adult students have never received government assistance as young women or men, just being over 25 or not being able to sustain a certain course load during a given semester disqualifies them for grants or loans, no matter how otherwise worthy they may be—or important their field of study. Because of the scarcity of and competition for resources, even as palliative recommendations are certain to be adopted, it seems naïve to hope for significant amelioration in the near future. That is why educators and legislators have to go back to consider the total U.S. educational ecology—and where to invest in our citizens in their educational trajectory without prejudice to their age.

The corollary point is to reiterate that it is dangerous to dissociate the discussion of adults facing difficulties earning college degrees from both our declining high school completion rates and our low rankings in global measures of elementary and secondary school standards in mathematical and scientific literacy and reasoning. In my preparation to speak today, I came across research documenting Indiana's admirable success in improving the proportion of its population going on to higher education. There seems to be a compelling link between that welcome outcome and the fact that the state mandated that the *college preparatory curriculum* at the high school become the default curriculum for all students. If that is an accurate finding, Indiana's approach must have significant and salutary policy implications nationwide: I would encourage further analysis in that regard.

This is highly relevant to the discussion about empowering community colleges to be the engine of raising our undergraduate degree completion rates. It is accurately understood that our community colleagues are remarkable, responsible and caring institutions, staffed by many heroic and devoted—and accountable—faculty, staff, and administrators. Yet most report disappointing degree completion rates, and protracted "time to completion" performance among the many who do earn their degrees. And the usual explanation is the need for remediation on the part of students. How can these institutions or our state colleges be criticized—or given more responsibilities to assume—when they are expected to welcome all students, regardless of their preparedness or capacity to achieve? We distort the purposes of higher education when "college" becomes the primary venue for remedial education. But if it turns out to be the only place where such remediation can be effectively delivered, let us not draw equivalencies between "readiness" programs and degree programs, and further confuse our understanding of the effectiveness of one or the other by failing to disaggregate data relevant to assessing their very different measures of effectiveness. We must as a nation assure opportunities for both, but not pretend that they are the same academic construct.

This strikes me as being especially important if we assume that because of the financial pressures facing "traditional" students and their families,

many will have to delay their pursuit of a degree. Outside of the Indiana experience, do we have corroborating data that demonstrate that those who have had the benefit of a college preparatory program at the high school level—even if they didn't go on to university or college immediately after earning their diplomas—are more likely to be successful when they return to commence or complete a degree (and not require subsequent remediation per se)? At NYU, whatever the evidence of our adult students' intellectual capacity and personal motivation, those who've had some formal preparatory experience before they come to us tend to be more consistently successful. Even if the answer to this question is self-evident, we cannot dissociate ways to increase the numbers of adult Americans with undergraduate degrees unless we improve the general rigor of our secondary education curricula and assure much improved high school completion rates earlier in the individual's learning career. Whatever goes on in our high schools affects for the decades that follow the capacity of the adults we serve to achieve their fullest potential. The sooner the learning—and the interventions—take place, the more lasting the benefits.

As panelists, we were all asked to address a series of questions. So with these broad conceptual preoccupations aside, the observations deriving from the experience of the university divisions I've led echo many that were affirmed earlier today:

The primary barriers to access and persistence for nontraditional students are:

- the inadequacy of financial resources available to them
- their reliance on debt financing, including expensive private loans
- declining tuition support from employers (a point to which I will return briefly)
- the very real psychological pressures they experience related to the uncertainty about the "payback" for their investment of dollars, sweat, and time, and frequent lack of confidence arising from the variety of challenges and responsibilities they have to manage
- support services that may not be tailored to the specific needs of the adult learner.

With regard to this latter issue—which is in our collective capacity to remedy—it is widely observed that the older you are, the more discouraged you feel when you discover what and how much you don't know. I'm not speaking simply about limited areas where remediation is justified, but having to confront the reality that the "A" you may have earned ten years before is not a substitute for remembering the prerequisite subject matter adequately. In institutions and programs where younger and older populations are mixed—while intergenerational chemistry can bring enormous reciprocal benefit—unless there is a highly functioning student services infrastructure geared to the older, returning adult student and able to mediate actively between the age cohorts, more often than not the older students become

IMPERATIVES FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Improve the General Rigor of Secondary Education Curricula

Address the Primary Barriers to Access and Persistence for Nontraditional Students

Remedy Risk Factors with Student Support Services Geared Toward Adult Learner

disproportionately disaffected. Specialized—and deeply committed—support personnel working lockstep with students, administrators, and faculty are essential to mitigate this very real risk factor.

But there is also, in my view, an overarching academic challenge:

- Uneven if not inadequate capacities among students in mathematical reasoning, independent and critical thinking, and written communication skills. These impediments to success reach back to the unevenness among earlier and formative educational experiences the students have had.

As to promising examples of state and institutional strategies:

- First and foremost, state funding for our public systems of higher education remains the most important investment that we must preserve as a society, along with continuing federal funding for students. It may not be in our hands to augment these resources at present, but further reduction would be fatal for our capacity to compete with other nations, and will violate our fundamental societal obligation to future generations.

- At the institutional level, also important (and a leitmotif of the conversation today) is the importance of faculty and advisory teams working with students in a holistic manner, providing specialized academic and career services for the adult learner. If the majority of our students are older, working, and part-time, the academic and support infrastructure they rely upon must be designed around them—not conceived as a mere extension of the services for 18-22 year olds.

- Among noteworthy local initiatives known to me, I commend to you the efforts of the **Graduate! Philadelphia** organization, which appears to be doing some very interesting things in workforce development, and in fruitful collaboration among higher education institutions, government, and businesses in Philadelphia.

With regard to other relevant policy recommendations that will enable us both to better understand the condition of adult students in our institutions, and to generate a sustained private/public sector for adults throughout their active lives:

- The recommendations made by the National Governors Association to the Department of Education, to develop different and better data and definitions must be embraced. The NCES's current categories are far too broad for us to understand the dynamic within the highly divergent different populations that make up the exceptionally broad community of the nontraditional adult learner.

- We need to recognize the place of tuition reimbursement as a public—not just private—benefit. Our federal, state, and local governments must encourage the private sector to maintain its historic role in supporting the ongoing educational development of its workforce at all ranks. From the perspective of our international competitiveness, we need to explore tax methodologies that will encourage greater employer investment in employees.

Working students at institutions across the country have suffered significantly over the past few years in the sudden disappearance of tuition support from their employers. Indeed, within the New York regional economy, "tuition reimbursement" has been such a fundamental characteristic of employment benefit structures, that until its sudden near demise in response to the Great Recession and our very slow recovery, my institution, for example, had not considered in our strategic planning the impact of the disappearance of this lynchpin factor of support for the adult learner. From St. Louis to Baltimore, Washington to Boston, and points west, many of the leading public and private institutions reported massive numbers of students stopping out of degree programs because of the ending or greatly reduced levels of employer assistance.

As a matter of federal and state policy and comparative benchmarking, it is worthwhile to consider the examples of countries like France and Germany, which have indirect tax incentives/penalties for employers to underwrite continuing education of their employees—which they can prioritize around company needs. (In France, companies have to demonstrate they have "spent" a small percentage of their payroll expenditures on employee continuing education, on a pooled but not a per capita basis; if they fail to do so, they are fined up to the defined percentage.)

And then, finally, building on my preoccupation with the importance of the STEM fields, I would support a federal initiative to spur the design and support of pilot projects that look at how to educate older adults in the sciences, engineering, technology innovation, and applied mathematics. At many institutions across the country, the degree curricula in programs that focus on adults may include aspects of healthcare, environmental planning, and information technologies, but primarily from a management, administrative, or application perspective. Since we know that engineering and the sciences are generating the research and the big new ideas that will invariably produce the transformative industries of our economic future, can we afford to exclude large cohorts of our college-going population from acquiring the means to participate in research-oriented education—just because of their age? Do we not want those among them who are capable to contribute to the growth and creation of those industries? While scholars know that the adult brain does perform differently as it matures and that the ability to perform higher cognitive skills in the sciences may be dependent upon formative, cumulative learning at earlier periods in individual intellectual (and neurological) development, surely it would be worthwhile to find

Encourage Greater Employer Investment in Employees

Consider Effective Policies and Practices From Abroad

Support a Federal Initiative to Educate Adults in STEM Fields

ways to unlock the untapped capacity of a large proportion of our citizenry and in the process demonstrate another aspect of the potentiality of the adult learner.

With this closing exhortation, I thank you for the honor to have been able to share my preoccupations and sense of urgent priorities about how we can best serve the ever-growing numbers of adult learners in our institutions of higher education.

Q&A: Institutional Panel

Helen Benjamin: Thank you very much. Gentlemen, thank you so much for sharing the nontraditional approaches used by your institutions in helping to meet the student that we're faced with today. Now, we have an opportunity, about 20 minutes, to engage with you in a bit of a discussion in the form of responsive comments or questions from our panel, or from Under Secretary Kanter, who's here with us today. So I turn it over to the Committee. Questions?

Anthony Guida (ACSFA Member): Dr. Lingenfelter had a great line earlier, that we spend the most money on those students who need it the least and vice versa. But, as Dr. Flint mentioned, there are risk factors that even the Department of Education has recognized. The more risk factors a student has, the less likely he is to graduate. For the riskier nontraditional students, the return on investment or the ability to succeed goes down just by virtue of the fact of who the students are. From an institutional perspective, it's a riskier proposition to enroll a riskier student because your graduation rates are lower, your default rates are higher, and so on. What policy recommendations can you think of that would encourage institutions, or would make it more desirable for institutions to take on a riskier nontraditional student? Right now, the way the system is set up, institutions are actually rewarded by not enrolling the riskier at-risk students. That, I believe, needs to change.

Chris Bustamante: Let me state that, as a community college, we don't have the luxury to not choose them because community colleges have open access admissions policies. That's why some have been critical recently of our, at times, lower graduation rates because we do the very difficult work with students who are at-risk. We have to keep the access—around the country, even community colleges are starting to talk about moving developmental education courses off the main campus. I know these discussions are beginning to take place.

But I think that's a very dangerous policy to allow. We need to continue to allow people to live that American dream. At institutions like ours, even though they're risky students, we need to give them that opportunity to make something of themselves. So access continues to be important, and, in spite of all these nontraditional student factors, there are people who are still going to get through. As we get better at institutionalizing strategies that work best for students, we're going to be more successful at getting them through. So I think a policy recommendation would be an incentive-based policy on best practices. We must also talk about these best practices so that we can get more institutions to see that predictive analytics and other tools may allow greater success that may reduce risks for institutions.

Javier Miyares: If I understood you correctly, you're talking about incentives for traditional institutions. I worked, like many of us, in a traditional research institution before my current position. My fear is that we can waste a lot of energy when, perhaps, traditional institutions have

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Encourage Institutions
to Invest in the Riskier
Nontraditional Student

Maintain an
Open Access
Admissions Policy

Recommend an
Incentive-Based Policy
on Best Practices

a culture of professional incentives, not just monetary, for the faculty and their prestige that is rather difficult to change. So I'm warning you that perhaps we should be careful how much energy we spend on that when we are in an environment of fairly limited resources. Perhaps incentives are better tailored to the at-risk and nontraditional students who then can choose among those institutions that are willing and able to serve them.

Scott Jenkins: But I think institutions also have to be willing to have hard conversations with all students when they walk in the door, be it an open access institution, or an institution like WGU. We accept about 88 percent of all students who seek admission. But there are a lot of cases where the institution's default curriculum is that students go through the associate's degree program and do a two-plus-two transition. In some cases, especially with institutions unconnected to a career tech center or something similar, that's where a student ends up when they might have been better served in a different place—and they have to have that conversation. So counseling a student on what their skills are when they walk in the door and where they can go and where the institution can get them is a conversation that needs to occur at the institutional level.

Thomas Flint: In certain respects, adult learners are less risky, insofar as the common theme around them is that they're often highly motivated. Adults who've made a decision to go back to college are going to spend the time and money—they're on a mission. A lot of faculty and staff have commented on how refreshing it is to see people who are so focused. I mentioned earlier, not just PLA students, but adult students generally tend to have higher GPAs.

I think part of the answer to your question is, yes, they are at risk for not completing the degree as rapidly as we might wish them to, but part of the reality we need to face is that, perhaps, we should celebrate the smaller successes on the way to earning that degree. Some of that could be done structurally through certificates, but some of it is our figuring out a way to recognize how the learning that's taking place is fueling benefits.

Anecdotally, a lot of adult educators will tell you that what most gratifies them is when a student tells them he's able to use and apply something he learned a few nights ago or last week. That's a small victory, but a real and significant one. We don't have to wait for college-level learning to be applied at some number of years in the future; we want it to make a difference in people's lives starting right away.

John McNamara (ACSFA Member): Without knowing any of your curricula, I certainly don't mean to disparage online learning—we're trying to move that as rapidly as we can at Rockford College—but one of the things that concerns me is the last point Dr. Lapiner made asking what is the place of science, math, and critical thinking in the fields we're advocating? One of my concerns, as a Great Books major in college, is that, with the rush to degrees, we're focusing more on training than education. Job-specific degrees may seem needed today, but may

seem obsolete tomorrow or in five or ten years. I'm all for adult learning, but I'm concerned about critical thinking skills.

Scott Jenkins: I'll give you my perspective, but I'm sure others will want to say something. At a traditional institution, the leadership of the institution—the president, the provost, and the academic team—are responsible for maintaining the brand of the institution, but the degree is owned by faculty, program, and department. What you find is huge variability in what that course entails—think back to your macroeconomic course as an undergraduate if you'd had professor A versus professor B.

At an institution like WGU, the institution owns the degree. We say what the student has to know and be able to do. The faculty serve a role to support and facilitate that learning. The illustration of that learning is no different, except there's no variability to it. We have a third party—a faculty member who has no vested interest in whether or not that student makes it past that competency—who evaluates the student's coursework and determines whether that student passes.

At a traditional institution, a faculty member sets the competencies that the student will learn, selects the textbooks and other resources, sets the assessments and grading standards, and that student can ultimately pass that class with a C-minus or a D. What does that mean in terms of whether or not they make it through the curriculum? At WGU, we separate all of that into separate individuals who are responsible for content, curriculum, assessment, and learning measurement. It doesn't change the nature of the actual learning, but it confirms the value when a third party makes the assessment.

Helen Benjamin: Other comments or questions? I do have one—Scott, in particular, I was thinking about your comment about student portfolios—I've forgotten your term for them—but the student completes three of the five successfully, but two remain and the student starts over. Is that close to what you said? My question is about that.

Scott Jenkins: Yes, if a particular competency requires passing five different sub-competencies, the student may take a pre-assessment, and if they pass three of the five, the student is directed to learning resources that will teach them the two sub-competencies that they need to know. Once they do that, they may retake the assessment to show that they've learned all the competencies. So we do a lot of pretesting and final testing.

Helen Benjamin: So in the case of online learning as a mode, a student independently can decide to choose online learning. But we know that every single student is not suited for that. Students may make that choice, but it may not be the right choice for their skills and learning abilities. How do you deal with those kinds of students—those who enroll, but for whom the instructor (or the student themselves) discovers that the learning mode is not appropriate? How do you handle that?

Determine the Ownership of Degrees at an Institution

Use a Third Party to Assess a Student's Learning

Use Testing As a Tool for Competency-Based Education

Scott Jenkins: It's a great question. A lot of institutions that provide online instruction have to deal with this. When a student enrolls, we run them through a battery of tests, but we also require them to take an Education Without Boundaries course that explains to them how this system works. Like I said, somewhere between 10 and 12 percent of students who apply don't make it past that. We also ask them, as part of that assessment, to consider whether they have a support network at home, adequate childcare, 12 to 20 hours to spend during the week, and so on. We ask a lot of those hard questions up front to get at that. But we're not perfect. We do some modeling of students to find out how well they're doing. That filters out about 90 percent of those students, but that one-to-one relationship with a mentor helps get the rest of the students through. But, like every institution, we're not all things to all people.

Helen Benjamin: And so they're counseled and they are aware, in advance of actually enrolling, as to whether that's a good fit?

Scott Jenkins: Right. And we will counsel students to go to a traditional institution, if that would better serve them, especially to a community college or other type of institution.

Javier Miyares: I think we all wrestle with that. In the case of UMUC, we have tried a free, one-week online course so students can test drive it and see if it is for them. Many who do the test drive, do not enroll. And that's okay because, clearly, it was not for them. But I don't think you are ever done. You're always trying to make sure the student makes the right decision.

Robert Lapiner: Certainly most institutions against which I would benchmark for best practices do something like that—provide an orientation for new students in the experience and expectations of their online teaching and learning program. If students discover early into the process that online study is not right for them, there's often a no-fault withdrawal and refund process.

But I'd like to comment on the question that was asked before: *the risks students face who study at a slow pace relative to those who assume the burden of a higher course load while working.* At NYU-SCPS, we have found that providing a mixture of paths for course completion maps against our students' drive for success. During a given semester, they can take a class face-to-face to sustain their need for a feeling of community, they can take one or more courses online (with students who are already part of their community), and they have access to other courses that are offered in intensive formats that meet only a few weeks or periodic weekends during the academic year. Students find the flexibility in such combinations best enable them to progress more rapidly and still balance their other responsibilities and the competition for time.

Without such options, there is no doubt that many adult learners, because of family or work responsibilities or cost, feel they can only manage one

class in a given semester, and the goal of degree achievement always seems far away. Yet they encounter the burdens of debt and scheduling hassles in real time—now. Separate from questions of academic performance per se, this mixture breeds the greatest danger of students' stopping out. That is why best practice models increasingly show that enabling the adult learner to take a larger course load over a finite period of time is more predictive of retention and, above all, students' academic success. Moreover, as students do become more marketable upon completion of their degrees, they find themselves sooner able to recover the investment they made (and debt they incurred) for their education.

Thomas Dalton: At Excelsior, we also have an online virtual orientation. Excelsior was founded in 1971 as an aggregator of credit. If, as Scott suggests, online learning isn't for everybody, and we do encourage some students to go to a traditional classroom, Excelsior still aggregates the credit for them.

Helen Benjamin: Gentlemen, thank you very much. That concludes the institutional panel for our session on nontraditional students. I will now turn it over to our Vice Chair and Chair-Elect, Norm Bedford, for final remarks.

Norm Bedford (ACSFA Vice Chair and Chair-Elect): Thanks, Helen. Our Chair, Allison Jones, had to depart early for a previous engagement. He does send his regrets.

All I can say, is, wow, what a great hearing we've had today. This is what the sharing of knowledge is, in my opinion, all about. So, to the panelists in front of us, thank you all again. I know it sounds a bit *ad nauseum* to repeat thank you several times, but, truly, thank you for your time and commitment.

Your testimony regarding the barriers, best practices, and federal role in improving degree and certificate completion for nontraditional students was extremely informative. To all of our panelists, we may seek your help again in the future. It would be wonderful to see you all again.

To the Advisory Committee, thank you all for your hard work, your dedication, and your commitment. I know a lot of people put a significant amount of time into this to make it what it is today. Again, thank you.

On behalf of this Committee, we are adjourned.

Contribute to Student Success Through Best Practice Models

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CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

The Advisory Committee's September 30, 2011, hearing, held in Washington DC, garnered a wealth of responses from twelve state and institutional experts regarding policy and practice surrounding the growing population of nontraditional students in the United States. Panelists addressed barriers to access and persistence, best practices for overcoming these barriers, and what role the federal government should play to encourage implementation of these strategies. The insights contributed and the recommendations made demonstrate an overriding consensus among panelists that increasing degree and certificate completion among nontraditional students will require modifications in the structure and delivery of higher education, as well as changes to federal student aid programs.

The September 30 hearing discussion largely affirmed the background research and ideas from the March 17 hearing. In particular, the September panel agreed that current definitions for the nontraditional student fail to capture the complexity and diversity of this demographic (pages 2-3). They also generally agreed with the March panel on the examples and types of barriers to access and persistence that nontraditional students face today (pages 3-6). The September panelists enlarged upon the March discussion by further identifying best practices in serving the nontraditional student and actions the federal government might take to increase degree completion among this population. This chapter seeks to summarize the main thoughts and ideas from the September discussion and the implications for federal policy.

The Need for a National Partnership

A federal-state-institutional-private-sector partnership is key to increasing degree completion among nontraditional students. Each entity has an important role to play in the partnership based on respective areas of authority and expertise. In addition, each may be in a position to encourage and support best practices among the other entities. The predominant goal of such a partnership is to increase national educational attainment among nontraditional students. A dedicated commitment to their success involves not only providing them with easier access to educational institutions, but with pathways and supports conducive to persistence and degree completion. From this partnership, a compilation of best practices may emerge that serve the adult learner and expand learning opportunities for students of all ages.

The September 30, 2011, hearing sought knowledge and insight from state and institutional leaders. By building upon this knowledge domestically and considering effective policies and practices from abroad, the United States may recover and expand upon its leadership role in postsecondary educational attainment for all students. The experiences of experts working with nontraditional students may help the nation enhance its existing educational structures, unleash the ambitions of a significant population of students with great potential for achievement, and provide avenues for upward mobility that for many are a hallmark of the American dream.

Each member of the partnership has an important role to play in identifying best practices and implementing programs based on them. The following section describes some of our panelists' ideas for identifying best practices and creating programs that embody best practices.

Role of the Federal Government

Higher levels of degree attainment must become a national priority. By establishing which outcomes are desired from the 2020 degree completion goal, whether a need for innovation, increased economic productivity, equipping students to become lifelong learners, or other significant outcomes, the federal government may more effectively design its education systems to reflect critical societal needs. The federal government's role is to lead the partnership by changing its own systems in ways that would

improve degree completion rates among nontraditional students while supporting the best practices of states, institutions, and the private sector.

Improving **data collection methods** is an important way that the federal government can lead the partnership among states, institutions, and the private sector to better serve nontraditional students:

- A **new Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) category** for institutions serving nontraditional students could provide valuable information on how nontraditional students are completing their educational goals, including their enrollment and completion patterns.

- It is also important to continue collaborations between the Department of Education, the Council of Chief State School Officers, State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), and other data-related organizations on common standards for **defining key data elements** and creating state and school systems for measuring the progress made by nontraditional students, such as the Common Education Data Standards.

- The federal government, along with state governments, should also emphasize achievement of credentials relative to enrollment and **improve definitions** of nontraditional students in order to accurately distinguish them in data analysis.

Developing better data collection methods and definitions for nontraditional students will aid a collaborative understanding of this diverse and evolving population, which would assist other members of the partnership to better define strategies for improving degree completion rates.

Reassessing the structure of **financial aid systems and programs** for the nontraditional student is another significant way that the federal government can demonstrate its leadership:

- Financial aid should be **focused on needy students** who wish to obtain their degree **and on institutions that serve nontraditional students well**. Institutions should be included that have made changes to their systems to accommodate the requirements of adult learners and those that ensure that their curriculum quality for nontraditional students, while it may be different in format, does not lag behind that offered to traditional students.

- Creating a new **grant program for middle-income working students** would ease the burden of debt for many nontraditional students who are debating whether to enroll and complete their degree.

- **Maintaining the Pell maximum** would help ensure student success, along with making Pell Grants an option for nontraditional students who are enrolled less than half-time if they are simultaneously employed.

- **Decentralizing aid programs** may prove to be beneficial. For example, states may provide need-based aid to institutions based on the percentage of needy students they enroll and allow institutions the flexibility to use professional judgment in awarding aid.

- Having a better sense of **tuition charged relative to the total cost to the institution** of educating the student would allow for a more efficient distribution of funding.

- For students who do not have a high school credential and have been out of school for many years, the federal government should consider **broadening the concept of Ability-to-Benefit (ATB)**, which refers to a required test for those students to gain federal financial aid eligibility. In addition to the test, ATB could include enrollment in an integrated adult basic education or General Educational Development (GED) program and college level programs.

Integrating federal, state, and institutional grant programs would combine key resources that would otherwise remain separated in order to support policies and programs for nontraditional students.

The federal government can also **support and expand upon other existing programs or practices** that serve nontraditional students, if these have been proven in current practice:

- The federal government might **assist institutions with prior learning assessment (PLA)** by making clear that all costs associated with assessing students' "college level" knowledge, skills, and abilities will be covered through Title IV, including faculty time.

- The federal government could **leverage funds** to support the success of nontraditional students. For example, the use of existing Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) funds could be targeted toward supporting research and programs for nontraditional students.

- **Partnerships among existing federal departments** could support programs that have already been proven effective, such as the partnership between the Department of Labor's Employment Training Administration (ETA) and the Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) for career pathways.

By including these ideas in future reform efforts, the federal government may effectively lead a partnership with states, institutions, and the private sector, thereby ensuring that the necessary resources are available for students to succeed in their academic programs.

The federal government should reevaluate the position that only degree study is worthy of federal support. The demands of ever-changing opportunities and the current economic climate have created new needs for credentials. Many non-degree programs and courses meet professional and academic standards. Indeed, **supporting non-degree programs** that meet such standards would be an excellent way for the federal government to reinvigorate the public-private partnerships that allow working students to enhance skill levels on a periodic basis, and, therefore, become more productive to industry.

The federal government should also focus on appropriate and well-executed **regulations** for today's educational institutions:

- The federal government should design policies that emphasize that **what one knows is more important than where or how one learned it**. Creating regulations that focus on credit hours as a benchmark for student achievement rather than evaluating students on learning outcomes through practices such as PLA conflicts with that view.

- **Stricter guidelines** under program integrity regulations such as Return to Title IV (R2T4) and Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) could remove financial aid from students who otherwise would have been eligible.

- State authorization regulations have the potential to be **costly and complicated**, particularly for online institutions.

The federal government should take full consideration of the potential effects on both nontraditional students and the institutions serving them when designing regulations.

The federal government can play a key role in spotlighting and encouraging the implementation of best practices while at the same time guaranteeing program integrity and student success. The federal government may **support the implementation of best practices** at individual institutions through various methods:

- The Department of Education might be encouraged to **issue Dear Colleague Letters**. For example, a June 7, 2011, Dear Colleague Letter provided institutional guidance on trial periods of enrollment, an effective practice already implemented at Kaplan University called the Kaplan Commitment.

- The federal government can encourage institutions to invest in what many institutions see as the "riskier" nontraditional students (e.g. those thought to be less likely to graduate) by **instituting incentive-based policies**.

- **Recognizing and rewarding implementation of best practices**, such as keeping tuition low or instituting cohort-based programs that allow groups of nontraditional students to move forward together, would encourage institutions to better serve riskier nontraditional students.

Identifying, disseminating, and encouraging best practices among institutions will be crucial to the enrollment and graduation of the nontraditional population.

In addition, the federal government should **encourage innovation** in serving nontraditional students:

- The federal government could **support the design and implementation of demonstration projects** for innovative models of delivery, such as competency-based education or experiential learning.

- Innovation may be spurred through a federal program allowing certain organizations the ability to **experiment outside the credentialing authority** bestowed by accreditation.

- To increase degree completion in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, a federal initiative to **encourage pilot projects** on educating adults in these fields could be instituted.

These efforts provide important incentives to aid in the discovery of efficient and effective systems that cater specifically to the nontraditional student.

There are a **variety of other ways** that the federal government could work to improve degree completion rates among the nontraditional population.

- **Supporting creation and maintenance of open educational resources** would increase access to learning resources.

- The federal government could **provide more robust systems of information and guidance.**

- The Department of Education could **create or support an interactive, online service** that provides information on PLA for degree completion, such as the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning's LearningCounts.org.

- The federal government could **support state aid programs** that encourage academic preparation and focused study, similar to the federally administered Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) program.

All of these efforts capitalize on the unique role that the federal government might play to spur creativity within the states, institutions, and the private sector to implement programs that result in better academic outcomes for the nation's nontraditional students.

Role of the States

The state role in the national partnership involves explicitly setting their own degree completion goals and reexamining policies in light of the needs of nontraditional students. For example, through the articulation of **more explicit and intentional learning objectives,** states may be able to achieve more of the education attainment they seek:

- One way to accomplish this is by **adopting the Common Education Data Standards** currently under development, common standards for defining key data elements and systems used to measure student progress and success.

- Because many nontraditional students are mobile over the course of their postsecondary education, data systems must be adopted that can **track students through their paths at multiple institutions** within and across states. This will require a close partnership of data collection and sharing among institutions and states.

- States can also better **integrate state education and workforce data systems**. With support from the federal government, states and organizations, such as the State Higher Education Executive Officers, have been working toward a better understanding of the student trajectory after graduation.

- A partnership between the National Governor's Association (NGA) and Complete College America (CCA) has not only **developed completion metrics** (key for measuring progress toward state degree completion goals), but has also disaggregated nontraditional students in order to measure and track their progress.

Collecting these data at the state level is critical to better understand the needs of this population.

Maintaining state funding for public colleges and universities and **implementing innovations in state funding** for institutions and students are also critical to the improvement of degree completion rates among nontraditional students:

- Wisconsin provides grants to students for both **academic as well as life expenses**.

- States are beginning to use **performance-based funding** with their allocations for higher education, which can be very effective when linked with the success of adult students.

- For college success, states should consider implementing aid programs that **encourage academic preparation and focused study**.

- Attending a degree program part-time should not financially penalize the working adult learner. Providing a **needs-based state financial aid program** for part-time students is one step toward financially supporting the working student.

- It is critical for low-income students that states **supplement Pell** to help them with tuition costs.

To ensure that their aid programs remain effective, states should stay abreast of possible changes to existing student aid programs and eligibility, such as stricter eligibility terms for Pell Grants.

States may also benefit from **combining key programs and services** to meet the needs and objectives of nontraditional students:

- States can create more flexible and integrated learning environments by **combining adult basic education and skills training** into a single program, such as the State of Washington's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program.

- States can **create and support multiple career pathways** through educational programs and student supports that provide students with the necessary credentials to secure or advance in their field, such as Oregon's Career Pathways Initiative.

- States may consider **partnering with online, competency-based, nonprofit providers**, such as Western Governors University (WGU), to address the time- and place-bound barriers of nontraditional students.

Integrating programs or services such as these allows states to more effectively serve nontraditional students.

Although often targeted under budget cuts, **student support services** provide the personalized guidance and academic support necessary for student success:

- The State of Washington's Opportunity Grant Program, the goal of which is to put low-income students into high-demand and high-wage workforce programs, provides students with a **single point of contact and advocates** to help students progress along their degree path. This fully funded program also provides advising services, success classes, and funds for emergency services.

- Another program that delivers comprehensive support services is Kentucky's Ready-To-Work program. This integrates certain Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) services with community and technical colleges, so that students can have their **social service and educational needs met in one place**.

- **State and regional consortia can provide advising services** for adult learners. The joint Air Force base advising office created by the Southwestern Council for Higher Education benefits both nontraditional students and the institutions they attend by better communicating the opportunities available to them and preventing uninformed decisions by students.

Comprehensive student services provide the guidance, direction, and support to ensure that students begin and follow through on their academic goals.

One of the best state strategies for improving degree completion among nontraditional students is **creating institutions** specifically geared towards their needs and objectives. States that have done so include:

- New York (**Excelsior College** and **Empire State College**)
- New Jersey (**Thomas Edison State College**)
- Connecticut (**Charter Oak State College**).

Practices these institutions have employed include PLA, online learning, strong credit transfer policies, and minimal- to no-residency requirements.

For the nontraditional student to succeed, states must **precipitate change at traditional higher education institutions**. States may accomplish this by encouraging institutions to follow through with programming aimed at student success through monetary incentives:

- The State of Washington's Student Achievement Initiative is an outcome-based system, which provides **monetary rewards** to institutions for student achievement. The greater the progress, the greater the reward.

- Tennessee revamped its funding to include **outcomes-based measures** of student success, such as degree and certificate completion, dual enrollment, and workforce training progress through the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010.

These types of state action signify a clear commitment to student success.

Better **articulation and transfer policies** will also support the mobile lifestyle of nontraditional students who attend multiple institutions:

- Florida has implemented a variety of innovative practices including a **common course number system**. Focused on learning outcomes rather than credit hours, a common course number system standardizes course designations across institutions making transfer easier for students.

- Texas has strong articulation and transfer policies. Their **retroactive degree** brings two- and four-year institutions together, providing students with a credential at 60 hours when students only complete half of a four-year program. This reduces the number of students who have accumulated many credits without a credential.

Other innovative practices include program major articulations, a common core curriculum, and block credit or associate degree transfers.

In order to prepare residents for postsecondary education, states should consider mandating a college preparatory curriculum in high school and **improving the overall rigor of secondary education curricula**:

- Indiana has successfully increased the number of students pursuing higher education after **mandating a college preparatory curriculum in high school**.

- The **Common Core State Standards Initiative** led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers provides consistent learning standards for K-12 students in preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce.

Successful high school preparation for the nation's students is key to the discussion of improving degree completion rates because lack of adequate preparation often requires remediation upon entering college or may be the cause of students leaving college without achieving their degree. States should empower open access institutions, especially community colleges, to be the engine of degree completion with the understanding that achieving results initially may be difficult because of the dual responsibility of providing remediation or "readiness" programs in addition to degree programs.

Role of the Institutions

To transcend cultural barriers to better serve nontraditional students, institutions must create a more **student-friendly approach** to higher education that values and caters to them. Celebrating the small victories for students en route to a degree is one way to achieve this objective. A number of institutions have worked on other innovative ways to serve nontraditional students:

- Private institutions, such as Liberty University and UMassOnline, as well as private sector companies, such as StraighterLine or University of the People, **provide students with a variety of options** including online learning, low- or no-cost education, and assistance with prior learning assessment to complete their credentials.

- Institutions may benefit from **aligning their mission to serving nontraditional students**. Excelsior College's mission, for example, is to help students who are not served well by traditional higher education, and it has become a leader in PLA and degree completion for nontraditional students.

- Institutions may **provide multiple entry and exit points** so that nontraditional learners have more control over their time. Kellogg Community College in Michigan instituted this practice for certain technology learning modules, allowing students to earn fractional credit hours for mastering competencies which could be applied to credentialed programs at the institution.

Institutional practices, such as modifying hours and seasons of operation to offer more flexibility, providing courses year-round or changing class schedules based on student availability, help to align a student's learning with their life and work. It is important to recognize and reward this kind of institutional innovation in order to help support and encourage success.

Changing the paradigms of scale and delivery relative to traditional colleges would meet the pent-up demand for convenient, accredited degree programs, such as **online programs**:

- Institutions should consider providing online programs as well as **in-person and hybrid programs** in multiple locations.

- At the same time, educational institutions and governments must work together to ensure that online offerings, which may be more open to abuse by unscrupulous parties, remain true to their enormous potential for **offering new educational courses and materials** with the flexibility of time and space.

- It must be determined whether online learning is appropriate for individual students. Online institutions should **counsel students to first attend a traditional institution** if that is the best route for them to complete a degree.

- Institutions may **use courses, tests, and trial periods** to help students determine the best institution to serve their needs. WGU's Education Without Boundaries course, which explains the WGU learning system to students upon enrollment, is one example of this type of practice.

Online education is important as a viable alternative to traditional institutions for the busy lives of nontraditional students.

Innovative uses of data and research may also support the postsecondary success of nontraditional students:

- Prior to or shortly after enrollment, institutions could **use predictive models** to help determine a student's likelihood of successfully completing college or an online course. This would allow institutions to identify at-risk students and begin intervention strategies to ensure success.

- Since all interactions in online learning are recorded, institutions could **employ analytics** to identify patterns leading to student success. For example, the Kresge Foundation provided the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) with a grant to conduct research on identifying patterns that produce student success at community colleges before entering an institution like UMUC.

Collecting and analyzing such data would provide institutions with the knowledge to further inform best practices for serving this population.

Student support services should be comprehensive, affordable, flexible, convenient, accessible, and geared towards the nontraditional student:

- Institutions should recognize the impact of **consistent life coaching** for at-risk students, which could address issues such as time and money management as well as study skills. For example, Excelsior College has a private contractor that provides life coaching services for at-risk students, and WGU's WellConnect Student Services provides life counseling to its students.

- WGU's use of faculty as student mentors, course mentors, and in student assessment has also proven effective. **Mentors** can ensure that adult learners are on a trajectory toward graduation through a one-to-one relationship and weekly contact. Course mentors design courses and determine the type of assessment used for each course, and adjunct faculty actually assesses the adult learners on course competencies.

- Rio Salado College's establishment of **in-person bridge programs** that target underserved populations provides students with the GED programs, adult basic education, developmental education, and short-term training necessary for them to progress in their job or academic program.

- Student services, such as the library, tutoring, and instructional support, should be **available 24/7 in a variety of formats**, including in-person, online, by phone, email, or chat.

- Rio Salado College provides online degree completion planning tools, orientations tailored to the needs of adult learners, and a **virtual community** of engagement between students, instructors, and staff.

- Rio Salado uses **customer relationship management solution technology** (CRM) to send mass personalized communications to students in order to facilitate student engagement and success.

Leveraging technology in multiple ways helps to ensure that student support services meet the needs of today's students.

To increase degree attainment nationally, institutions must **assess previous credits** to maximize credentials:

- Employing underutilized strategies and policies that promote access and persistence, such as **PLA**, may assist nontraditional students not only in enrolling, but also in reducing time to degree. These reforms would allow graduation in a reasonable time frame.

- The **American Council on Education credit recommendations** on corporate and military training allow institutions to recognize learning that has taken place outside traditional higher education.

- **Portfolios**, which are a collection of a student's work assessed for the achievement of college learning rather than a formal standardized test, should also be counted as a prior learning option.

- To support assessment of prior learning, four-year institutions may consider **articulation agreements** with community colleges and accepting associate's degrees as a valid credential for four-year transfer.

- Employing a **common course number system**, along with state efforts, would also assist students who are more broadly mobile.

- Whenever possible, adult learners' **credits should be put into a credential**, such as an associate degree at the halfway mark on the way to a baccalaureate, as credits locked into a credential do not expire. Four-year institutions should be encouraged to partner with a community college, or award associate degrees, if chartered to do so.

Colleges must understand the negative impact of refusing to award credit for prior learning, especially for adult learners who have already attended one or more previous colleges.

Nontraditional students, who may be balancing a family and employment with their postsecondary education, face many risks for early attrition. Institutions should endeavor to **prevent attrition** in a variety of ways:

- Providing a **mix of learning opportunities**, such as online or face-to-face programs as well as intensive evening or weekend courses, will grant adult learners the flexibility to continue their education.

- **Shorter class terms** would allow these students to maintain momentum, and caring instructors would facilitate student success.

- Institutions may consider utilizing **student cohorts**, which allow students to progress together through an entire program and provide the motivation and support for successful degree completion.

Institutions should also provide cost-free mechanisms to minimize the risk of failure among students. The ability to test an academic program before financial commitment is one example. In particular, Kaplan University's Kaplan Commitment program allows students to take five weeks of regular course work in their initial term of study to determine if Kaplan is the right fit. If they withdraw, the student is only obligated to pay the initial enrollment fee as opposed to a full program.

With financial barriers providing considerable influence on the enrollment of nontraditional students, institutions must focus on **keeping college costs affordable** using multiple innovative methods. For example, institutions could:

- **lock in tuition rates** through an entire academic program
- use **course-embedded materials**
- **customize books** and e-books
- provide **scholarships** for successful academic progress
- offer **general courses** that are flexible, accessible, and transferrable to colleges and universities
- provide **accelerated learning formats**, such as a modularized curriculum.

To facilitate the use of accelerated learning, Rio Salado College customized its own learning management system (LMS), which allows students to compress a 14-week online course to an 8-week online course with one click. Given the time- and place-bound barriers that students face, it helps when institutions never cancel an online course.

Many nontraditional students work to support themselves and their families, and return to school to gain skills required for **advancing or changing their career**:

- To increase degree attainment among nontraditional students, institutions may focus on awarding adult learners with **degrees in areas of high workforce demand** such as STEM fields, healthcare, and business.

- Given that government funding for higher education will not likely increase in the near future, **aligning workplace needs with learning objectives** and academic programs will be even more important to ensure the nation's national competitiveness and enable student success.

Given the evolving demographics of adult learners, the role of community and technical colleges must continue to adapt.

Institutions should accommodate the different rates of learning by student and subject through practices such as **competency-based education**:

- Competency-based education, at institutions such as WGU, **establishes academic competencies** for various courses of study, which are informed by discussions with business, industry, and academic leaders.

- Faculty members **find the best learning resources** to teach competencies, and students then take and pass those competencies on their own. This allows students to progress through an academic program at their own pace.

- Because the **institution owns the degree** and determines the learning requirements, there is a greater degree of uniformity in course content.

- Rather than a single faculty member creating, teaching, and assessing courses, competency-based providers can split such tasks among different individuals, allowing the institution to **objectively confirm a student's learning** by using a third party for assessment.

- **Pre- and final testing** can be an effective tool to determine if there are sub-competencies within a competency a student has yet to master. For instance, students may pretest out of three subcompetencies, but must take and pass two additional subcompetencies in order to pass.

These types of practices put the learning in the hands of the student.

By evolving traditional methods of delivery, institutions may effectively impact traditional levels of degree completion. For the nontraditional or 21st century student, innovation will be key to academic success.

Role of the Private Sector

While traditional college students pursue higher education to gain entry into the private sector, many nontraditional students already operate within it. Working full- or part-time, nontraditional students often have more clearly defined career goals and pursue programs that fulfill both academic and professional needs. The private sector plays an important role in the funding and development of academic programs specifically tailored to their needs.

With nontraditional students dedicating many of their academic pursuits to career advancement, the private sector must guide academic programs along with other higher education entities. Employers should be financially engaged in the professional development of employees, and federal and state policies should encourage that investment. Indeed, action by private sector institutions may evolve some of the more creative solutions to helping nontraditional students move forward, as well as identify less workable practices faster than institutions might. If institutions fail in their mission, nontraditional students may take their hard-earned funds and enroll elsewhere. Such competition will put pressure on higher education administrators to connect with industry leaders and discuss what works and what does not in terms of best serving nontraditional students.

Institutions should **integrate the expertise and knowledge of the private sector** in its academic programs:

- New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies advisory board includes distinguished industry leaders and practitioner faculty, resulting in **academic programs that align with the expectations of recruiters** from a variety of specialized industries and sectors, benefitting students in the job search process.

- As previously discussed, WGU's competencies are informed by **input from business, industry, and academic leaders**.

- UMUC has recently **restructured its curriculum**, paying special attention to the expectations of graduates in the workplace.

These considerations are important in terms of addressing the needs of students and industry as well as incentivizing employee assistance programs for businesses.

Another example of successful integration between the private sector and higher education is Graduate! Philadelphia. This program, focused on the Greater Philadelphia region, is a collaborative effort among government, institutions, and businesses that is working to increase degree attainment among adult learners. Initiatives such as these would also help promote adult degree attainment.

The role of the private sector is considerable in the success of the nontraditional student. Employers from both large and burgeoning small and mid-size businesses should be brought in to higher education discussions at the ground level and throughout the process in order for the nation to receive the benefits of graduates who can contribute diverse skills to complement societal and business needs.

Conclusion

Better serving the large population of nontraditional students will require governments at all levels to reconsider a number of longstanding policies and practices. Postsecondary institutions will also need to grow and change in significant ways. Many offices and institutions are already doing so, as the wealth of programs described in the Advisory Committee's September 30, 2011, hearing attests.

One of the United States' fundamental tenets is that the individual should have the opportunity to aspire to a better life. While it is true that a great deal of change needs to occur to break down barriers that hinder degree attainment among nontraditional students, doing so represents not a burden but a vast opportunity. For many states, it is also a necessity, as more than half of states will see no or slow growth in their 18- to 24-year old population in the next few years.

Our governmental and educational institutions have the opportunity to embrace front and center a number of valuable goals along the way to greater degree attainment. Some of these goals include creating better structures for lifelong learning among our general population, initiating more effective workforce credentialing, testing new technologies and methods for use in our education system, promoting educational opportunities across the country, and bringing people with new perspectives and diverse skills into the academy as both learners and institutional partners.

If care and attention are used to expand quality educational opportunities for nontraditional students, greater degree attainment can be achieved. Developing appropriate and well-executed higher education structures and partnerships will breathe new life into an educational tradition of the United States—allowing citizens to achieve their full potential and use their talents for the greater good.

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APPENDIX A: Examples of Subgroups That Comprise the Nontraditional Student Population

Nontraditional students can include, but are not limited to, the following broad, overlapping subgroups:

- Single parents (adult single parents, teen single parents, and children living in single parent households)
- Married students (divorced, widowed)
- Students with dependent children
- Students working full-time
- Part-time students
- Financially independent students
- Military personnel (active duty, reservist, and veteran)
- Adult learners (ready adult)
- Dislocated workers
- Low-income students (low-income adults)
- Working poor
- Unemployed poor
- Public assistance recipients
- Homeless students (accompanied homeless youth)
- High school non-completers (GED students)
- Historically underrepresented minorities (e.g. African American and Hispanic males)
- Distance learners (online learners)
- English as a Second Language (ESL) students
- First-generation students
- Undocumented students
- Students with disabilities (physical, mental, and learning disabilities)
- Older adults (senior citizens, retirees)
- Under-prepared students
- Students from foster care
- Orphans
- Wards of the court
- Minors

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS BY SUBGROUP IN A SAMPLE OF PUBLICATIONS

Adult Learners	De Vito (2009) Working Adults	Accessibility	Lack of time
			Lack of flexibility
			Lack of appropriate instructional methods
		Affordability	Financial aid designed for full-time students
			Pell Grant restrictions
			State student aid follows federal eligibility rules
		Accountability	Consumer information on higher education focuses on traditional students
	Kazis et al. (2007)	Program Structure and Duration	Inflexible schedules and difficult to access locations
			Long course and program duration
			Inflexible entry, exit and re-entry
			Losing motivation to continue during pre-collegiate education
		Pedagogy and Supports	Lack of appropriate teaching methods
			Lack of adult-focused academic and social supports
		Poor Alignment of Learning Institutions and Systems	Little cross-institutional collaboration or sharing of resources
			Disconnect between non-credit and credit programs
			Inability to transfer credits or lack of recognition of learning in different contexts
	Michelau & Lane (2010) "Ready Adult"		Financial aid concerns
			Complexity of re-enrollment process
			Class scheduling and alternative delivery modes
			Transcript issues
			Anxiety and fear
			Prior learning assessment issues

APPENDIX B (CONT.)			
Distance Learners	Zirkle (2004)	Institutional Barriers	Program Costs
			Resource Availability
			Lack of equipment and infrastructure
			Scheduling
			Instructional Concerns
			Technical Assistance
		Student Barriers	Costs and motivators
			Feedback and teacher contact
			Alienation and isolation
			Student support and services
			Lack of experience/training
First-Generation Students	Engle (2004)	Factors Affecting Access	Lower levels of academic preparation
			Lower educational aspirations
			Less encouragement and support to attend college, particularly from parents
			Less knowledge about the college application process
			Fewer resources to pay for college
		Factors Affecting Success	Lower levels of academic preparation and performance
			Less study and time management skills
			More difficulty navigating bureaucracy of academic life
			Less confidence in ability to succeed
			Less likely to engage in academic and social experiences associated with success in college
			Cultural adaptation

APPENDIX B (CONT.)		
High school non-completers (GED students)	Patterson, Zhang, Song, and Guison-Dowdy (2010)	Perception that college is too difficult or not for everyone
		Lack of skills to succeed in college
		First-generation college student status
		Strong negative life experiences that interfere with persistence or completion
		Costs of postsecondary education
		Competing time demands
		Discouragement from remedial courses and lack of perceived educational progress
Historically underrepresented minorities (e.g., African American and Hispanic males)	The College Board (2010)	Lack of role models
		Search for respect outside of education world
		Loss of cultural memory in shaping minority male identity and pride
		Barriers of language
		Challenges of poverty
		Extraordinary community pressures
		Sense that education system is failing young men
		Imprisonment and/or recidivism
Homeless Students	National Center for Homeless Education (2010) Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Lack of financial means to live independently and safely
		Limited housing options, especially in small towns or rural areas
		Lack of connection with adults or agencies that could help
		Struggling to balance school with other responsibilities
		Lack of adult guidance and support
		Lack of access to parental financial information and support
		Inability to be financially self-sufficient once enrolled in college
		Failure to access available support systems

Low-Income Students	Cook & King (2004) Low-Income Adults	Adult obligations/social distractions
		College financing
		Course choice
		Self-esteem
		Counseling and advising
Military	Radford (2009)	Financing their postsecondary education
		Balancing family responsibilities with school
		Transition to civilian and college life after military service
		Difficulty relating to other students and faculty
		Difficulty with timely reimbursement of education expenses
		Lack of clear information regarding veterans' education benefits
		Difficulty transferring credits between institutions and receiving credits for military experience
Public Assistance Recipients and Low-Income Single Parents	Price, Steffy, and McFarlane (2003)	Often come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds
		Are often first-generation college students
		Often have learning disabilities
		Often have children and/or family members with special needs
		Often face recurrent family and/or health issues
		Often face difficulties getting reliable child care and transportation
		Often face recurrent financial crises
Students from Foster Care	Dworsky & Pérez (2009)	Failure of child welfare system to promote postsecondary education
		Students may be unprepared for college-level work
		Most foster youth cannot depend on parents and family members for financial or emotional support
		Considered "financially independent" but often unaware of financial aid for which they are eligible
		More likely to exhibit emotional and behavioral problems persisting into early adulthood
		Student services are not familiar with or prepared to address unique needs of this population

APPENDIX B (CONT.)			
Students with Disabilities	Wolanin & Steele (2004)		Physical barriers of campus facilities
			Lower income than peers
			Faculty attitudes and academic culture towards students with disabilities
Working Poor	McSwain & Davis (2007)	Working Poor Adults	Heavy work and family responsibilities prevent full-time enrollment
			Enrollment patterns may impact ability to receive federal need-based grants
			Inability to cover out-of-pocket cost of postsecondary attendance and financial aid fails to meet need
			Part-time enrollment poses risk to student persistence and degree attainment
		Working Poor Youth	Working poor college students contend with barriers associated with first-generation
			They have limited resources to pay for college and few can rely on parents for financial support
			Financial constraints and obstacles associated with being a first-generation college student
Undocumented Students	Erisman & Looney (2007)		Stresses of immigration
			Lack of information about postsecondary education
			Work and family responsibilities
			Financial need
			Inadequate academic preparation and achievement
			Limited English proficiency

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Mr. Thomas Babel
Vice President, Regulatory Affairs
DeVry Inc.

As Vice President of Regulatory Affairs for DeVry, Mr. Babel is responsible for assuring that DeVry's institutions operate in compliance with all federal, state, and provincial regulations affecting school operations and student financial assistance programs. His responsibilities include interacting with federal and state lawmakers as well as the agencies that regulate school operations. Prior to his appointment as Vice President of Regulatory Affairs, Tom was Vice President of Student Finance for DeVry University, and was responsible for compliance with U.S. and Canadian federal, state, and provincial financial assistance regulations, delivery of federal and state financial aid, policy development, student finance systems development and maintenance and staff training and quality assurance for DeVry University.

Mr. Babel has worked extensively with the U.S. Department of Education on a number of program and modernization initiatives, including chairing Project EASI - a national program to reengineer the student aid delivery process. He was a nonfederal negotiator in the 2007 and 2009 negotiated rulemaking sessions. Mr. Babel has served as a presenter at numerous financial aid and higher education conferences. He has held several elected and appointed positions with state, regional, and national associations. Mr. Babel received a master of business administration from Keller Graduate School of Management of DeVry University and a bachelor of arts in mathematics from Wabash College.

Dr. Bryan Cook
Director of the Center for Policy Analysis
American Council on Education

Dr. Cook is the Director of the Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council on Education (ACE). He designs and conducts in-depth analyses on current higher education topics and emerging federal policy issues in support of ACE's legislative agenda. Most recently, Dr. Cook has done extensive work on the *Higher Education Opportunity Act* of 2008 and the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* of 2009.

Dr. Cook has managed several ACE initiatives, including a three year project that looked at ways of ensuring academic success for low-income adults and a two year project focused on programs and services for military service members and veterans in higher education. Dr. Cook has authored publications and/or presented on a wide array of higher education topics, including higher education diversity, student enrollment and persistence trends, educational attainment, financial aid, college finance, and federal reporting requirements.

Dr. Cook received his PhD and MA from the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. He received his BA in urban planning from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Ms. Melissa F. Gregory
College Director of Student Financial Aid
Montgomery College

Ms. Gregory is the College Director of Student Financial Aid for Montgomery College, a multi-campus community college in Maryland enrolling approximately 37,000 credit students. Ms. Gregory has worked

as a financial aid administrator in the Washington D.C. metropolitan region for 31 years at schools including the George Washington University, the University of Maryland College Park, Frederick Community College, and Montgomery College. She is active in financial aid legislative issues and testified on both the federal and state levels supporting financial aid application simplification and increased access to college for all students. She conducts financial aid training with local, state, and national associations and speaks frequently to community groups, high schools, and middle schools concerning the financial aid application process and aid programs.

Ms. Gregory is a graduate of Montgomery College, with bachelor's and master's degrees from the George Washington University. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in education with a concentration in community college leadership at Morgan State University.

Dr. Carol Kasworm
W. Dallas Herring Professor
North Carolina State University

Dr. Kasworm is the W. Dallas Herring Professor of Adult and Community College Education in the Department of Leadership, Policy, and Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University. Dr. Kasworm's career has included leadership, administration, instructional, and program development efforts in faculty and academic administrative roles at several universities. Her main research and writing interests have focused upon the adult undergraduate experience, including the nature of learning engagement and participation patterns of adult students, the situated influences of varied higher education contexts on adult learners, and of the role of adult higher education in a lifelong learning society. Her scholarship includes her recent co-editorship of the *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*, as well as numerous other publications.

Among Dr. Kasworm's honors are induction into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame; American Association for Adult and Continuing Education; Outstanding Research Award, Division of Research, National University Continuing Education Association; and Fellow of the International Self-Directed Learning Society. She provides current leadership on the Executive Board of the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame, the Board of North Carolina Adult Education Association, and the Wake County Literacy Council. Among other professional contributions, Dr. Kasworm has participated in varied leadership roles in the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education, the Commission of the Professors of Adult Education, the Adult Education Research Conference, and the American Educational Research Association.

Dr. Kasworm received a BA degree in psychology and sociology from Valparaiso University, an MA in higher education from Michigan State University and an EdD in adult education from University of Georgia.

Dr. Demarée Michelau
Director of Policy Analysis
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Dr. Michelau is the Director of Policy Analysis at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). The author of numerous education reports, policy briefs, and magazine articles, she has experience in higher education policy on issues such as accelerated learning options, adult learners, college affordability and access, articulation and transfer, and K-16 reform. Previously, she worked for the National Conference of State Legislatures as a policy specialist. Dr. Michelau received a bachelor's degree in public law from Northern Illinois University and a master's degree and PhD in political science from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Dr. Laura Perna
Professor
University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education

Dr. Perna is Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to moving to Penn, she was a faculty member at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her current scholarship draws on multiple theoretical perspectives and a variety of analytical techniques to understand the ways that social structures, institutional practices, and public policies separately and together enable and restrict the ability of women, racial/ethnic minorities, and individuals of lower socioeconomic status to enroll and succeed in college. Her research has been supported by grants from many foundations and agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences and the Lumina Foundation for Education and has been recognized by the Association for the Study of Higher Education's 2003 Promising Scholar/Early Career Achievement Award.

Dr. Perna serves or has served as a member of the technical review group for the GEAR UP Follow-up evaluation, the technical work group of the Upward Bound and Student Support Services Innovative Practices Study, the technical review panels for the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, Beginning Postsecondary Student Survey, and the Baccalaureate and Beyond Survey, the Institute for Higher Education Policy's Advisory Board, the American Council on Education's Center for Policy Analysis Advisory Board, the National College Access Network Research to Practice Advisory Committee, and the Lumina Foundation for Education's Research Advisory Committee. In addition, she serves or has served on the editorial boards of many higher education journals.

Dr. Perna holds a BA in psychology and BS in economics from the University of Pennsylvania, and a master's of public policy and PhD in education from the University of Michigan.

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STATE PANEL

Mr. Scott A. Copeland
Policy Associate-Student Services
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Scott Copeland serves as the liaison to student services organizations, including financial aid administrators, and works with Board program staff to establish collaborative links with community and technical colleges around financial aid issues and aid programs unique to Washington State. These efforts include analyzing policy direction and legislation associated with financial aid, workforce education, transfer, and basic skills education as they relate to student services objectives of student access, retention, and progression. Mr. Copeland has 26 years of higher education student service experience serving Western Washington University, Saint Martin's University, the University of Puget Sound, and Centralia College.

Mr. Copeland earned associate degrees from Highline Community College and Centralia College and a bachelor of arts degree in business administration/marketing and economics from Western Washington University. He is the 1999 and 2009 recipient of the Distinguished Service to Youth Award presented by the Pacific Northwest Association for College Admission Counseling.

Dr. Paul E. Lingenfelter
President
State Higher Education Executive Officers

Paul Lingenfelter became CEO of SHEEO in 2000, where his work has focused on increasing successful participation in higher education and the public policies required for educational excellence. Under his leadership, the SHEEO staff organized the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education in 2005, created the annual study *State Higher Education Finance*, and published *More Student Success: A Systemic Solution*. He is the author of numerous studies and articles related to his work in higher education and philanthropy, and he currently serves on the boards of the National Student Clearinghouse and the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability.

From 1985 to 2000, Dr. Lingenfelter served the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, where in 1996 he was appointed Vice President to establish and lead the MacArthur Foundation Program on Human and Community Development. He also served the Foundation as Associate Vice President for Planning and Evaluation and Director of Program Related Investments. Dr. Lingenfelter was Deputy Director for Fiscal Affairs for the Illinois Board of Higher Education from 1980 to 1985 and held other administrative positions with the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the University of Michigan from 1968-80.

Dr. Lingenfelter holds an AB from Wheaton College in literature, an MA from Michigan State University, and a PhD from the University of Michigan in higher education with an emphasis in public policy.

Dr. Camille (Cam) Preus
Commissioner
Department of Community Colleges & Workforce Development
Oregon State Board of Education

Camille Preus is the Commissioner of the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD). CCWD provides leadership and advocacy with the Governor, the legislature, and other statewide stakeholders for Oregon's 17 community colleges, seven workforce investment areas, and many community-based organizations. Prior to her appointment as Commissioner, Dr. Preus held leadership roles in workforce development at the local and state levels. She speaks frequently at national forums about education and workforce development topics where she focuses on her philosophy of state and local partnership for improved service delivery and results for people. Prior to her government service, Dr. Preus held positions as a chemist and quality control manager with United States Steel.

Dr. Preus graduated from Cumberland Junior College, Middle Tennessee State University; she earned an MSBA from Indiana University and received her doctorate in community college leadership from Oregon State University.

Mr. Travis Reindl
Program Director, Education Division
Center for Best Practices
National Governors Association

Travis Reindl oversees the postsecondary education work area in the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices. His concentration is on postsecondary access and completion. He is also the lead on the 2010-2011 NGA Chair's Initiative, which focuses on increasing college completion and productivity. Mr. Reindl most recently served as State Policy and Campaigns Director at Communication*Works*, L.L.C., a Washington DC-based public affairs firm. From 2006 to 2008, he served as Program Director at the Boston-based Jobs for the Future, where he led Making Opportunity Affordable. Previously, Mr. Reindl headed the state policy analysis unit at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and oversaw government relations and institutional research for the South Dakota Board of Regents.

A native of South Dakota, Mr. Reindl holds a BA from the University of Notre Dame and an MPP from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Ms. Amy Sherman
Associate Vice President for Policy and Strategic Alliances
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

Amy Sherman is Associate Vice President for Policy and Strategic Alliances at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). Her work focuses on increasing access to adult learning and improving its quality. In this role, Ms. Sherman engages in policy research and analysis, coalition-building, advocacy, and technical assistance to state and federal policy leaders. She works closely with federal and state legislators to develop and advance legislation to strengthen America's workforce. Ms. Sherman also leads CAEL's national initiative to advance Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs), which are employer-matched educational accounts to finance lifelong learning for working adults.

Prior to joining CAEL, Ms. Sherman was Executive Director of the Manufacturing Workforce Development Project (MWDP), a project of the Chicago Federation of Labor funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. She has also practiced employment law at major law firms such as Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal.

Ms. Sherman earned her law degree with honors from Northwestern University School of Law, where she later served as a dean of students.

Dr. Peter J. Stokes
Executive Vice President & Chief Research Officer
Eduventures, Inc.

Dr. Stokes leads Eduventures' team of researchers and consultants, who work with hundreds of colleges and universities across the country as they seek to recruit students, develop faculty, manage costs, and produce high-quality graduates. In the 10 years that he has been with Eduventures, his work has focused on helping colleges and universities serve adult learners, grow online enrollments, educate future teachers, and demonstrate meaningful outcomes. Prior to joining Eduventures, Dr. Stokes was Manager of the industry research group at Daratech, Inc., an information technology market research firm. He has also held teaching positions at Tufts University and the Massachusetts College of Art.

In 2005, Dr. Stokes was recognized as one of "higher education's new generation of thinkers" by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. More recently, he provided testimony to U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings' Commission on the Future of Higher Education, and later served as an advisor to the commission in the development of its final report, *A Test of Leadership*. Dr. Stokes has been a member of the CHEA Tenth Anniversary Commission, which sought to support the strengthening of higher education accreditation. He worked on Governor Deval Patrick's Commonwealth Readiness Commission to support the development of a ten-year strategy for education in Massachusetts. In 2011, his essay, "What Online Learning Can Teach Us about Higher Education," will be published by Harvard Education Press in an American Enterprise Institute edited volume entitled *Reinventing the American University*.

Dr. Stokes has a graduate certificate in business administration from Cardean University, and a BA and a PhD in literature from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

INSTITUTIONAL PANEL

Dr. Chris Bustamante
President
Rio Salado College

Chris Bustamante is President of Rio Salado College, one of the ten Maricopa Community Colleges, and the largest online community college in the nation serving nearly 70,000 students annually, with over 41,000 students online. Previously, Dr. Bustamante served as Interim President, Vice President of Community Development and Student Services, Dean of Academic Affairs, and in senior level government affairs positions. He is well-known as an advocate for increasing access to higher education and for forging transformational partnerships.

Dr. Bustamante earned an MEd and EdD in educational leadership from Northern Arizona University and a BS in business administration from the University of Arizona.

Mr. Thomas J. Dalton
Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management
Excelsior College

Mr. Dalton has served as Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management at Excelsior College since November 2006. He oversees all financial aid programs for Excelsior's nontraditional student population, including working adults, members of the military, and veterans. Excelsior College, a nonprofit, regionally accredited distance learning institution, strives to remove obstacles to the educational goals of adult learners, and to meet the needs of those traditionally underserved in higher education. The College

is a recognized leader in Prior Learning Assessment and degree completion for adult students, and is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Prior to his work at Excelsior, Mr. Dalton served as Senior Vice President of Customer Relations for the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) and Assistant Vice-President of the Loans Division of HESC. He is the former Director of Financial Aid at the Albany College of Pharmacy. Earlier, he served as an Assistant Director of Financial Aid and as a Financial Aid Counselor at Siena College in Loudonville, New York.

In addition, Mr. Dalton is a Past-President of the New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association (NYSFAAA) and Eastern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Association (EASFAA). He has over 30 years of administrative financial aid experience.

Dr. Thomas Flint
Vice President for Regional Accreditation
Kaplan University

Tom Flint is Kaplan University's Vice President for Regional Accreditation, having previously served Kaplan in other senior administrator roles involving accreditation and academic continuous quality improvement. Before joining KU in July 2005, he served as Vice President for Lifelong Learning and Research at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, one of the world's leading organizations promoting the interests of the adult learner. He has also served in a variety of administrative roles with career-focused institutions, including Robert Morris University (Illinois) and DeVry University. During his career in higher education, Dr. Flint has consulted with dozens of institutions about best practices in serving adult learners, co-authored two books on best practices, and authored more than two dozen journal articles, including research studies for the *Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, *Journal of College Admission*, *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, and *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*.

A graduate of Northwestern University's School of Speech, Dr. Flint holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Mr. Scott Jenkins
Director of External Relations
Western Governors University

Scott Jenkins is currently the Director of External Relations for Western Governors University. Prior to this role, Mr. Jenkins served as the Senior Education Policy Director for Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana. In this capacity, he directed the Governor's education agenda with the Indiana Department of Education, the Commission for Higher Education, the State Student Assistance Commission, and the Department of Workforce Development. Additionally, he facilitated the Governor's education legislative priorities with the Indiana General Assembly. Mr. Jenkins was instrumental in creating WGU – Indiana under the leadership of Governor Daniels.

Immediately prior to working for Governor Daniels, Mr. Jenkins served as a senior policy consultant with Achieve, Inc., on the American Diploma Project; worked as the Indiana state policy advisor for the Lumina-funded Making Opportunity Affordable project; and consulted with Jobs for the Future, Inc., on the Achieving the Dream initiative.

Mr. Jenkins has worked for over 15 years for both the state and federal government, culminating his public sector work as a Deputy Assistant Secretary at the United States Department of Education. In his

varied career in public service, he has worked for both the Florida and Michigan Departments of Education and State Legislatures. He also served as former Michigan Governor John Engler's Education Policy Coordinator.

Dr. Robert S. Lapiner
Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Continuing Education
New York University

Robert S. Lapiner is recognized as one of the nation's most successful leaders in university-based continuing higher education. Beginning this fall, Dr. Lapiner has been asked to assume a new strategic leadership and planning role for New York University, in the newly created position of Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Continuing Education. From February 2006 through August 2011, he served as Dean of the New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies (NYU-SCPS). Before coming to NYU, Dr. Lapiner was dean of Continuing Education and UCLA Extension at the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to joining UCLA, he was Deputy Executive Director and Director for Europe for the Council on International Educational Exchange. From 1976-82, Dr. Lapiner was a career diplomat in cultural and educational affairs with the U.S. Foreign Service. For his work in the Congo (then Zaire), he received a Meritorious Honor Award from the U.S. government.

Dr. Lapiner has been a faculty member and guest lecturer on five continents. His recent research and writing interests focus on the global demographic, socio-cultural, and technology-driven changes transforming the mission and practice of higher education and its capacity to provide and shape opportunities for continuing access to learning to meet the needs of students of all ages throughout their active lives. A Woodrow Wilson Fellow and Harvard Graduate Prize Fellow, Dr. Lapiner earned his BA from UCLA, and received an MA and PhD from Harvard University in British and American Languages and Literature.

Mr. Javier Miyares
Senior Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
University of Maryland University College

Javier Miyares serves as the Senior Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness at University of Maryland University College. In this capacity, Mr. Miyares provides leadership to the assessment of learning outcomes, research on teaching and learning in the online environment, the University's enterprise data warehouse, business intelligence and analytics, the development of learner metrics, and institutional planning and research.

Prior to joining UMUC in 2001, Mr. Miyares was Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration at the University System of Maryland, where he had also served as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Mr. Miyares was the lead staff member for USM on issues related to strategic planning, accountability, student learning assessment, and institutional research. Mr. Miyares' more than 30 years of higher education experience includes employment with the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University of Maryland, College Park.

Mr. Miyares earned bachelor's and master's degrees in sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he also completed all the requirements but the dissertation for a doctorate in educational measurement and statistics.

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APPENDIX E: ACSFA MEMBERS

Norm Bedford, Chair
Director, Financial Aid and Scholarships
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Box 452016
4505 S. Maryland Parkway
Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-2016
Appointed: 10/01/2008
U.S. Senate appointee

Helen Benjamin, Vice Chair
Chancellor
Contra Costa Community College District
500 Court Street
Martinez, California 94553
Appointed: 10/02/2008
U.S. House of Representatives appointee

David L. Gruen
Past National Chair
National Association of Student Financial Aid
Administrators
Retired
41519 N. Tangle Ridge Court
Phoenix, Arizona 85086
Appointed: 10/02/2009
U.S. Senate appointee

Anthony J. Guida, Jr.
Senior Vice President of Strategic Development
and Regulatory Affairs
Education Management Corporation
210 Sixth Avenue, Suite 3300
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222
Appointed: 10/02/2008
U.S. House of Representatives appointee

Kathleen Hoyer
Student Member
The University of Maryland--College Park
2110 Benjamin Building
College Park, Maryland 20742-1165
Appointed: 04/16/2010
U.S. Secretary of Education appointee

William T. Luckey
President
Lindsey Wilson College
L.R. McDonald Administration Building,
President's Office
210 Lindsey Wilson Blvd.
Columbia, Kentucky 42728
Appointed: 10/02/2009
U.S. Senate appointee

John F. McNamara
Vice President for College Development
Rockford College
5050 E. State Street
Rockford, Illinois 61108
Appointed: 08/07/2009
U.S. Secretary of Education appointee

Deborah Stanley
Director of Financial Aid
Bowie State University
14000 Jericho Park Road
Bowie, Maryland 20715
Appointed: 12/22/2010
U.S. House of Representatives appointee

Sharon Wurm
Director of Financial Aid, Scholarships, Student
Employment and Veterans Services
Truckee Meadows Community College
7000 Dandini Blvd, RDMT 315C
Reno, Nevada 89512
Appointed: 10/05/2010
U.S. Senate appointee

APPENDIX F: ACSFA STAFF

William J. Goggin
Executive Director

Janet L. Chen
Director of Government Relations

Anthony P. Jones
Director of Policy Research

Tracy D. Jones
Senior Administrative Officer

Jennifer R. Nupp
Associate Director of Policy Research

Jeneva E. Stone
Senior Writer

APPENDIX G: ACSFA AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

The Advisory Committee was established by an act of Congress in 1986. Section 491 of the Higher Education Act as amended contains the Committee's Congressional mandate. A copy of this section as it appears in the law follows:

SEC. 491. ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.--(1) There is established in the Department an independent Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (hereafter in this section referred to as the "Advisory Committee") which shall provide advice and counsel to the authorizing committees and to the Secretary on student financial aid matters. (2) The purpose of the Advisory Committee is-- (A) to provide extensive knowledge and understanding of the Federal, State, and institutional programs of postsecondary student assistance; (B) to provide technical expertise with regard to systems of needs analysis and application forms; (C) to make recommendations that will result in the maintenance of access to post-secondary education for low- and middle-income students; (D) to provide knowledge and understanding of early intervention programs and to make recommendations that will result in early awareness by low- and moderate-income students and families— (i) of their eligibility for assistance under this title (ii) to the extent practicable, of their eligibility for other forms of State and institutional need-based student assistance; (E) to make recommendations that will expand and improve partnerships among the Federal Government, States, institutions of higher education, and private entities to increase the awareness and the total amount of need-based student assistance available to low- and moderate-income students; and (F) to collect information on Federal regulations, and on the impact of Federal regulations on student financial assistance and on the cost of receiving a postsecondary education, and to make recommendations to help streamline the regulations of higher education from all sectors.

(b) INDEPENDENCE OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.--In the exercise of its functions, powers, and duties, the Advisory Committee shall be independent of the Secretary and the other offices and officers of the Department. Notwithstanding Department of Education policies and regulations, the Advisory Committee shall exert independent control of its budget allocations, expenditures and staffing levels, personnel decisions and processes, procurements, and other administrative and management functions. The Advisory Committee's administration and management shall be subject to the usual and customary Federal audit procedures. Reports, publications, and other documents of the Advisory Committee, including such reports, publications, and documents in electronic form, shall not be subject to review by the Secretary. Notwithstanding Department of Education policies and regulations, the Advisory Committee shall exert independent control of its budget allocations and expenditures, personnel decisions and processes, procurements, and other administrative and management functions. The Advisory Committee's administration and management shall be subject to the usual and customary Federal audit procedures. The recommendations of the Committee shall not be subject to review or approval by any officer in the executive branch, but may be submitted to the Secretary for comment prior to submission to the authorizing committees in accordance with subsection (f). The Secretary's authority to terminate advisory committees of the Department pursuant to section 448(b) of the General Education Provisions Act ceased to be effective on June 23, 1983.

(c) MEMBERSHIP.--(1) The Advisory Committee shall consist of 11 members appointed as follows: (A) Four members shall be appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate, of whom two members shall be appointed from recommendations by the Majority Leader of the Senate, and two members shall be appointed from recommendations by the Minority Leader of the Senate. (B) Four members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, of whom two members shall be appointed from recommendations by the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, and two members shall be appointed from recommendations by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives. (C) Three

members shall be appointed by the Secretary, of whom at least one member shall be a student. (2) Each member of the Advisory Committee, with the exception of the student member, shall be appointed on the basis of technical qualifications, professional experience, and demonstrated knowledge in the fields of higher education, student financial aid, financing post-secondary education, and the operations and financing of student loan guarantee agencies. (3) The appointment of a member under subparagraph (A) or (B) of paragraph (1) shall be effective upon publication of such appointment in the Congressional Record.

(d) FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.--The Advisory Committee shall--(1) develop, review, and comment annually upon the system of needs analysis established under part F of this title; (2) monitor, apprise, and evaluate the effectiveness of student aid delivery and recommend improvements; (3) recommend data collection needs and student information requirements which would improve access and choice for eligible students under this title and assist the Department of Education in improving the delivery of student aid; (4) assess the impact of legislative and administrative policy proposals; (5) review and comment upon, prior to promulgation, all regulations affecting programs under this title, including proposed regulations; (6) recommend to the authorizing committees and to the Secretary such studies, surveys, and analyses of student financial assistance programs, policies, and practices, including the special needs of low-income, disadvantaged, and nontraditional students, and the means by which the needs may be met; (7) review and comment upon standards by which financial need is measured in determining eligibility for Federal student assistance programs; (8) appraise the adequacies and deficiencies of current student financial aid information resources and services and evaluate the effectiveness of current student aid information programs; (9) provide an annual report to the authorizing committees that provides analyses and policy recommendations regarding— (A) the adequacy of need-based grant aid for low- and moderate-income students; and (B) the postsecondary enrollment and graduation rates of low- and moderate-income students; (10) develop and maintain an information clearinghouse to help students of higher education understand the regulatory impact of the Federal Government on institutions of higher education from all sectors, in order to raise awareness of institutional legal obligations and provide information to improve compliance with, and to reduce the duplication and inefficiency of, Federal regulations; and (11) make special efforts to advise Members of Congress and such Members' staff of the findings and recommendations made pursuant to this paragraph.

(e) OPERATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.--(1) Each member of the Advisory Committee shall be appointed for a term of 4 years, except that, of the members first appointed-- (A) 4 shall be appointed for a term of 1 year; (B) 4 shall be appointed for a term of 2 years; and (C) 3 shall be appointed for a term of 3 years, as designated at the time of appointment by the Secretary. (2) Any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of the term of a predecessor shall be appointed only for the remainder of such term. A member of the Advisory Committee serving on the date of enactment of the Higher Education Amendments and College Opportunity Act of 2008 shall be permitted to serve the duration of the member's term, regardless of whether that member was previously appointed to more than one term. (3) No officers or full-time employees of the Federal Government shall serve as members of the Advisory Committee. (4) The Advisory Committee shall elect a Chairman and a Vice Chairman from among its members. (5) Six members of the Advisory Committee shall constitute a quorum. (6) The Advisory Committee shall meet at the call of the Chairman or a majority of its members.

(f) SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT FOR COMMENT.--The Advisory Committee may submit its proposed recommendations to the Department of Education for comment for a period not to exceed 30 days in each instance.

(g) COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES.-- Members of the Advisory Committee may each receive reimbursement for travel expenses incident to attending Advisory Committee meetings, including per

diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by section 5703 of title 5, United States Code, for persons in the Government service employed intermittently.

(h) PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES.--(1) The Advisory Committee may appoint such personnel as may be necessary by the Chairman without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and may be paid without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates, but no individual so appointed shall be paid in excess of the rate authorized for GS-18 of the General Schedule. The Advisory Committee may appoint not more than 1 full-time equivalent, nonpermanent, consultant without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code. The Advisory Committee shall not be required by the Secretary to reduce personnel to meet agency personnel reduction goals. (2) In carrying out its duties under the Act, the Advisory Committee shall consult with other Federal agencies, representatives of State and local governments, and private organizations to the extent feasible. (3)(A) The Advisory Committee is authorized to secure directly from any executive department, bureau, agency, board, commission, office, independent establishment, or instrumentality information, suggestions, estimates, and statistics for the purpose of this section and each such department, bureau, agency, board, commission, office, independent establishment, or instrumentality is authorized and directed, to the extent permitted by law, to furnish such information, suggestions, estimates, and statistics directly to the Advisory Committee, upon request made by the Chairman. (B) The Advisory Committee may enter into contracts for the acquisition of information, suggestions, estimates, and statistics for the purpose of this section. (4) The Advisory Committee is authorized to obtain the services of experts and consultants without regard to section 3109 of title 5, United States Code and to set pay in accordance with such section. (5) The head of each Federal agency shall, to the extent not prohibited by law, cooperate with the Advisory Committee in carrying out this section. (6) The Advisory Committee is authorized to utilize, with their consent, the services, personnel, information, and facilities of other Federal, State, local, and private agencies with or without reimbursement.

(i) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.--In each fiscal year not less than $800,000, shall be available from the amount appropriated for each such fiscal year from salaries and expenses of the Department for the costs of carrying out the provisions of this section.

(j) SPECIAL ANALYSES AND ACTIVITIES.--The Advisory Committee shall-- (1) monitor and evaluate the modernization of student financial aid systems and delivery processes and simplifications, including recommendations for improvement; (2) assess the adequacy of current methods for disseminating information about programs under this title and recommend improvements, as appropriate, regarding early needs assessment and information for first-year secondary school students; (3) assess and make recommendations concerning the feasibility and degree of use of appropriate technology in the application for, and delivery and management of, financial assistance under this title, as well as policies that promote use of such technology to reduce cost and enhance service and program integrity, including electronic application and reapplication, just-in-time delivery of funds, reporting of disbursements and reconciliation; (4) conduct a review and analysis of regulations in accordance with subsection (l); and (5) conduct a study in accordance with subsection (m).

(k) TERM OF THE COMMITTEE.--Notwithstanding the sunset and charter provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. I) or any other statute or regulation, the Advisory Committee shall be authorized until October 1, 2014.

(l) REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF REGULATIONS. --(1) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Advisory Committee shall make recommendations to the Secretary and the authorizing committees for consideration of future legislative action regarding redundant or outdated regulations consistent with the Secretary's requirements under section 498B. (2) REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF REGULATIONS.—

(A) REVIEW OF CURRENT REGULATIONS.—To meet the requirements of subsection (d)(10), the Advisory Committee shall conduct a review and analysis of the regulations issued by Federal agencies that are in effect at the time of the review and that apply to the operations or activities of institutions of higher education from all sectors. The review and analysis may include a determination of whether the regulation is duplicative, is no longer necessary, is inconsistent with other Federal requirements, or is overly burdensome. In conducting the review, the Advisory Committee shall pay specific attention to evaluating ways in which regulations under this title affecting institutions of higher education (other than institutions described in section 102(a)(1)(C)), that have received in each of the two most recent award years prior to the date of enactment of Higher Education Amendments and College Opportunity Act of 2008 less than $200,000 in funds through this title, may be improved, streamlined, or eliminated. (B) REVIEW AND COLLECTION OF FUTURE REGULATIONS.—The Advisory Committee shall— (i) monitor all Federal regulations, including notices of proposed rulemaking, for their impact or potential impact on higher education; and (ii) provide a succinct description of each regulation or proposed regulation that is generally relevant to institutions of higher education from all sectors. (C) MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC WEBSITE.—The Advisory Committee shall develop and maintain an easy to use, searchable, and regularly updated website that—(i) provides information collected in subparagraph (B); (ii) provides an area for the experts and members of the public to provide recommendations for ways in which the regulations may be streamlined; and (iii) publishes the study conducted by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences under section 1106 of the Higher Education Amendments and College Opportunity Act of 2008. (3) CONSULTATION.— (A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the review, analysis, and development of the website required under paragraph (2), the Advisory Committee shall consult with the Secretary, other Federal agencies, relevant representatives of institutions of higher education, individuals who have expertise and experience with Federal regulations, and the review panels described in subparagraph (B). (B) REVIEW PANELS.—The Advisory Committee shall convene not less than two review panels of representatives of the groups involved in higher education, including individuals involved in student financial assistance programs under this title, who have experience and expertise in the regulations issued by the Federal Government that affect all sectors of higher education, in order to review the regulations and to provide recommendations to the Advisory Committee with respect to the review and analysis under paragraph (2). The panels shall be made up of experts in areas such as the operations of the financial assistance programs, the institutional eligibility requirements for the financial assistance programs, regulations not directly related to the operations or the institutional eligibility requirements of the financial assistance programs, and regulations for dissemination of information to students about the financial assistance programs. (4) PERIODIC UPDATES TO THE AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES.—The Advisory Committee shall— (A) submit, not later than two years after the completion of the negotiated rulemaking process required under section 492 resulting from the amendments to this Act made by the Higher Education Amendments and College Opportunity Act of 2008, a report to the authorizing committees and the Secretary detailing the review panels' findings and recommendations with respect to the review of regulations; and (B) provide periodic updates to the authorizing committees regarding— (i) the impact of all Federal regulations on all sectors of higher education; and (ii) suggestions provided through the website for streamlining or eliminating duplicative regulations. (5) ADDITIONAL SUPPORT.—The Secretary and the Inspector General of the Department shall provide such assistance and resources to the Advisory Committee as the Secretary and Inspector General determine are necessary to conduct the review and analysis required by this subsection.

(m) STUDY OF INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS TO BACCALAUREATE DEGREE ATTAINMENT. --(1) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Advisory Committee shall conduct a study of the feasibility of increasing baccalaureate degree attainment rates by reducing the costs and financial barriers to attaining a baccalaureate degree through innovative programs. (2) SCOPE OF STUDY.—The Advisory Committee shall examine new and existing programs that promote baccalaureate degree attainment through innovative ways, such as dual or concurrent enrollment programs, changes made to the Federal Pell Grant

program, simplification of the needs analysis process, compressed or modular scheduling, articulation agreements, and programs that allow two-year institutions of higher education to offer baccalaureate degrees. (3) REQUIRED ASPECTS OF THE STUDY.—In performing the study described in this subsection, the Advisory Committee shall examine the following aspects of such innovative programs: (A) The impact of such programs on baccalaureate attainment rates. (B) The degree to which a student's total cost of attaining a baccalaureate degree can be reduced by such programs. (C) The ways in which low- and moderate-income students can be specifically targeted by such programs. (D) The ways in which nontraditional students can be specifically targeted by such programs. (E) The cost-effectiveness for the Federal Government, States, and institutions of higher education to implement such programs. (4) CONSULTATION.— (A) IN GENERAL.—In performing the study described in this subsection, the Advisory Committee shall consult with a broad range of interested parties in higher education, including parents, students, appropriate representatives of secondary schools and institutions of higher education, appropriate State administrators, administrators of dual or concurrent enrollment programs, and appropriate Department officials. (B) CONSULTATION WITH THE AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES.—The Advisory Committee shall consult on a regular basis with the authorizing committees in carrying out the study required by this subsection. (5) REPORTS TO AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES.— (A) INTERIM REPORT.—The Advisory Committee shall prepare and submit to the authorizing committees and the Secretary an interim report, not later than one year after the date of enactment of the Higher Education Amendments and College Opportunity Act of 2008, describing the progress made in conducting the study required by this subsection and any preliminary findings on the topics identified under paragraph (2). (B) FINAL REPORT.—The Advisory Committee shall, not later than three years after the date of enactment of the Higher Education Amendments and College Opportunity Act of2008, prepare and submit to the authorizing committees and the Secretary a final report on the study, including recommendations for legislative, regulatory, and administrative changes based on findings related to the topics identified under paragraph (2).