

January 7, 2010

MEMORANDUM

To: State Board of Regents
From: William A. Sederburg
SUBJECT: Participation Task Force --Update

Issue

At the July 2009 Regents' meeting, the Board charged the Office of the Commissioner's Outreach and Access unit and USHE Presidents to begin working together to establish meaningful participation goals and strategies to enhance or create new programs and/or partnerships for the populations they serve. In the August 2009 Council of Presidents meeting it was determined that a working team must be identified. Each President has designated a high level member of his/her administration as the point of contact with the Commissioner's Office to represent their institution on this working team. This working group is comprised of the following members:

- University Of Utah: Vice President Barbara Snyder
- Utah State University: Vice President James Morales
- Weber State University: Vice President Janet Winniford
- Southern Utah University: Vice President Donna Eddleman
- Snow College: Director of Admissions, Greg Dart
- Dixie State College: Vice President Frank Lojko
- College of Eastern Utah: Vice President Brad King
- Utah Valley University: Assistant to the President, Kyle Reyes
- Salt Lake Community College: Vice President Deneece Huftalin
- Office of the Commissioner: Associate Commissioner David Buhler and Assistant Commissioner for Outreach and Access, Melissa Miller Kincart.

Participation is a complex issue to tackle. It includes issues of student academic readiness and preparation, access, perceptions and attitudes toward education, family background and barriers such as inadequate financial aid or lack of information and navigation skills. Our institutions have multifaceted approaches, offices, programs and initiatives that straddle the "Participation" responsibility that encompass outreach, access, recruitment, admissions, financial aid, advising and marketing, to name a few. Additionally, Dr. Clifford Adelman in his 2007 article for the Carnegie Foundation *Do We Really Have an Access Problem?* argues that participation includes not only those students who have entered higher education but who have

established enough momentum toward obtaining a certificate or degree. He asserts that students have equal responsibility with the institutions in which they attend to take an active role in their participation.

Progress to Date

The group convened for the first time on November 5, 2009. The focus of this meeting was to understand the Task Force charge, discuss the 2009 Utah Public Opinion Survey, review participation data, and to map out its direction for the coming year. The group spent a good deal of time talking about ways to clean up and refine the college participation data in an effort to present data which accurately reflect where we are today to more effectively benchmark for the future. Dr. Joseph Curtin, Director of Office for Institutional Research, and his team are currently working on the following refinements.

- Refining Utah's college participation rate by removing for-profit schools to include only USHE institutions, as well as BYU and Westminster College. Additionally, determine a USHE college participation rate.
- Building upon the college participation work/report which included 2007 high school graduates, and add 2008 and 2009 high school cohort information.
- Creating participation rate and data indicator information for each institution as well as peer institution comparative data (i.e., new student applications, admitted and enrolled students, ACT and GPA averages, male, female and ethnicity comparisons, financial aid percentages, first-year retention rates, and six-year graduation rates).

The Task Force also discussed other possible areas for future discussion: College readiness and high school preparation, remedial and developmental education, student intent—degree completion versus workforce development, underserved students and understanding what other states doing to increase college participation. The group was encouraged by Vice President Donna Eddleman to read the new book by William Bowen and Colleagues, *Crossing the Finish Line*, which is a combination of evidence and analysis regarding college completion at American's public universities.

Moving Forward and Proposed Timeline

The Task Force will meet on February 5, 2010 to:

- Review the refined participation data.
- Learn more about the research study in progress under the direction of Dr. Susan Madsen from Utah Valley University focusing on why Utah women under-enroll and under-complete at our institutions.
- Present and discuss other state participation strategies.

February-May

- Meet at least twice--Data and definition refinement, explore issues, strategies, collaborations that affect participation, and begin discussions on realistic and incremental statewide and individual institution benchmark and goals.

June-September

- Meet at least twice-Benchmark and goals refinement, development of dashboard to chart progress, and compile data and recommendations.
- Report on progress at June's Board of Regents meeting.

October

- Conclusions and recommendations will be reported to the Council of Presidents and the Board of Regents.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only; no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to read and take note of the information in this memorandum, and note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Participation strategic objective.

William A. Sederburg, Commissioner