

**TOPIC: MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

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**I. SUMMARY**

On April 26, 2012, the Department of Higher Education invited chief financial officers, chief academic officers, and chief student services officers from the state's public colleges and universities to a three-hour meeting, the second of three such meetings, at the Tivoli Student Center on the Auraria Campus. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the ways in which other states recently approached the development of metrics intended to measure progress toward statewide goals. Commissioners Pacey, Haynes, and Kauffman joined the event in order to listen to the discussion. During the meeting, Dr. Patrick Kelly of the National Center of Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) presented examples of metrics used by other states and provided general recommendations for the delivery of a successful plan. This was followed by discussions among participants concerning the approaches other states took concerning the measuring of performance.

**II. STAFF ANALYSIS**

**NCHEMS Presentation**

Dr. Patrick Kelly from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) provided a presentation concerning the ways in which other states measure performance. A copy of Dr. Kelly's presentation is available in Addendum A.

Importantly, beyond the approaches other states have taken regarding the development of performance metrics, Dr. Kelly provided general recommendations for the successful implementation of such measures. Dr. Kelly's recommendations are as follows:

1. Align to overall state goals
2. Be relatively few in number
3. Be measurable with available data
4. Be sensitive largely to institutional practice – not external forces
5. Not be in conflict with one another – i.e., performing well on one should not negatively influence another

**Feedback from Campus Executive Officers, by Goal**

Following Dr. Kelly's presentation, meeting attendees were assigned to different "states" and asked to review and provide feedback on their approaches to measuring performance. The

following state plans were used for this exercise: Tennessee, Missouri, Oregon, Indiana, and Kentucky. These states were selected as each recently finalized or is in the process of finalizing its postsecondary performance plan.

Though each state's plan differed in important ways, the feedback meeting attendees provided regarding the plans was by and large consistent. The following concepts received general support from the meeting's participants.

1. **Interim Measures.** There was general consensus among the meeting participants that interim measures—such as “momentum points” at 15, 30, and 60 credit hour thresholds—were valuable and should be incorporated into Colorado's performance framework.
2. **Volume.** There was also apparent consensus that the volume of credentials produced—that is, the absolute number of degrees—was a viable and reasonable metric for state-level plans. Several of the state plans evaluated by the participants included subordinate metrics regarding the volume of credentials by type (A.A., B.A., M.A., and so on) and in specific fields (e.g., STEM and health). Participants generally supported the limited use of these variations.
3. **On-time Completion.** Though much of the conversation concerning credential attainment focused on increasing the number of postsecondary credentials, it was argued that on-time completion (e.g., 3-year or 6-year rates), as were found in several state plans, should be encouraged and measured in Colorado. Meeting participants reasoned that on-time completion is a metric of significant importance to campuses and should be included in the state's design.
4. **Transfer In/Out.** Several state plans evaluated the “flow” of students in and out of institutions. Most of the state plans evaluated by the meeting participants included transfer measures. Participants in the meeting generally supported the use of transfer metrics, though no specific recommendations were offered concerning the actual design of metrics intended to capture these patterns.
5. **Developmental Education.** Most of the state designs included metrics regarding the performance of students assigned to developmental courses. Several state designs evaluated the success of remedial education as the passing of college-level courses in English and mathematics. In other words, instead of evaluating success in developmental courses, the preference was to evaluate success after completing developmental courses. This concept was by and large strongly supported by the meeting participants.

Other Refining Suggestions. In addition to the specific metrics reported above, several additional approaches either used by other states or offered by the meeting participants themselves were discussed.

The first recommendation was to employ three-year rolling averages to the metrics. It was argued that this would help smooth out one-year anomalies and thus provide a more accurate observation of institutional trends.

Second, participants who were assigned to review Missouri's performance plan liked the way that state recognized outstanding institutional performance. According to Missouri's plan, institutions are expected to make annual incremental progress toward the state goals unless the institution is already performing in the top quartile among its peers on the metric. In the Missouri plan, institutions that sustain levels of performance at or above the top quartile of their peers are labeled as "maintaining excellence." Institutions with this classification are not required to make incremental annual improvements.

Third, one group of participants argued that it would be important for the state to incorporate measures of "satisfactory academic progress." This concept would, for example, evaluate a student's success in receiving academic credits by comparing the number of credits earned to the number of credits attempted. In other words, it was argued that measuring the proportion of credits earned to the number of credits attempted would serve as a more truthful reflection of student progress.

Finally, at least one group of administrators suggested that, regardless of the metrics used, the planning and performance process should result in new ways for the Department of Higher Education to assist institutions of higher education in the state. Some participants said, while they accept the state's need to focus attention on a variety of performance metrics, they hoped that the Department would use information developed during the process to help campuses better understand the impacts of campus-based innovations and best practices. In other words, it was suggested that the metrics should not simply be used for accountability, but also to assist the development of new capacities at campuses throughout the state.

The next meeting between the Department of Higher Education and campus executive officers will take place on Tuesday, May 23 at the Colorado School of Mines.

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**No recommendation. Discussion item only.**

V. **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

See Addendum A

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

23-1-108 C.R.S.

**Addendum A:**

**Dr. Patrick Kelly's Presentation on Performance Metrics from Other States**