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Recent Changes to Postsecondary Governance in States: 2011-2013

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Between 2011 and 2013, five states transformed their postsecondary governance systems: **California, Connecticut, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington**. One state, California, disbanded its postsecondary coordinating board entirely. The other states—Connecticut, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington—modified the scope and roles of their coordinating boards. Oregon and Connecticut created new postsecondary coordinating boards, while Rhode Island and Washington disbanded their boards but later reassigned many of their authorities under new governing bodies. One state, Oregon, created an entirely new governance structure across the state’s “P-20” spectrum. Finally, Rhode Island consolidated the state’s coordinating and governing authorities across K-12 and postsecondary education under one statewide board.

Summary descriptions of these changes appear below.

California: Disbanding the State’s Postsecondary Coordinating Body

The California legislature dissolved the Postsecondary Education Commission on November 18, 2011. Originally charged with developing a statewide plan for postsecondary education and approving academic programs, the commission later extended its influence by creating a central data clearinghouse, which provided tuition and fees comparisons, information on college enrollment and completion rates, and one-click access to numerous data points. The

archived website includes 50-state data comparisons, information on employment pathways, and education statistics for local counties.

In the absence of a state coordinating body, data collection and strategic planning responsibilities have been transferred to the state's three system boards: the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, California State University Board of Trustees, and University of California Board of Regents.

Connecticut: Creating a Statewide Governing Board

Under [legislation](#) enacted in 2011, the Connecticut General Assembly created the [Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education](#), which assumed academic and financial authority over the Connecticut State University System, the Connecticut Community Colleges, and Charter Oak State College, the state's online public institution. The board will consist of nineteen members, nine of whom are appointed by the governor. Initially, three members will serve two-year terms, three members will serve four-year terms, and three members will serve six-year terms. Thereafter, members will hold office for six years. The other four members will be appointed by legislative leaders and represent individuals with a previous relationship to postsecondary institutions and a Pre-K-12 specialist. These members initially will serve three- or four-year terms, but all will serve for four years after their first term. The chairperson and vice-chairperson of the student advisory committee will serve as members. The Commissioners of Education, Economic and Community Development and Public Health and the Labor Commissioner will serve as ex-officio, nonvoting members of the board.

The legislature provided the newly formed board of regents with authorities often associated with state-level coordinating bodies, including (1) setting statewide tuition and fees; (2) reviewing degree and certificate programs; (3) establishing financial aid policies; and (4) coordinating statewide policy through periodic strategic planning. Before the statewide governing board was created, academic affairs and finance matters were addressed at the institutional level.

Oregon: Developing a New System of Governance

The Oregon legislature created the [Education Investment Board](#) with the passage of [Senate Bill 909](#) (2011). The law enables the governor to appoint 12 members to the board. The governor or his/her designee serves as the chair. Each member serves at the pleasure of the governor; there are no set board terms. The board selects a Chief Education Officer to oversee a unified "Preschool to Postsecondary Education System."

Lawmakers charged the board with improving learning outcomes. Two accountability instruments were developed to effectuate state goals and achieve desired student outcomes:

achievement compacts and a statewide student database. The achievement compacts are agreements between education entities (e.g., Oregon University System, community college districts, and K-12 school districts) and the Education Investment Board. The compacts identify target numbers for achievement of specific outcomes, including the (1) attainment of diplomas, certificates and degrees; (2) attainment of postsecondary education goals; (3) a projection of the progress needed to achieve those goals by 2025; and, (4) validation of course and program quality. Notably, the legislation creates a unified education budget through which the Chief Education Officer allocates funding to early learning entities, school districts, and postsecondary institutions.

[Senate Bill 242](#) (2012) created the [Higher Education Coordinating Commission](#). The commission consists of 15 members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate, including one student each from a community college and public university. Each of the members serves for a four-year term, except for the students, who serve two-year terms. Commissioners are eligible for reappointment. In 2013, legislators required the commission to accomplish the following activities:

- Evaluate state goals and institutional achievement compacts
- Collect postsecondary data for the Oregon State Longitudinal Data System
- Approve academic programs
- Adopt rules governing the distribution of state appropriations.

Oregon's split governance creates a new division of labor through which the Education Investment Board coordinates funding and attainment of state goals across the P-20 education spectrum and the coordinating commission holds institutions accountable to new, more ambitious postsecondary system goals.

Rhode Island: Advancing P-20 Accountability through a Consolidated Board

The 2012 Rhode Island budget bill, [H.B. 7323](#), abolished both the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Governors for Higher Education. The legislation, which went into effect in January 2013, replaced both agencies with the [Rhode Island Board of Education](#). The new 11-member board is appointed by the governor with consent of the senate. Initially, four members serve three-year terms, four members serve two-year terms, and three members serve a one-year term. Thereafter, all members will serve three-year terms. The board oversees all education activities at the K-12 and postsecondary levels and appoints a Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education and a Commissioner of Higher Education.

The board of education maintains an executive committee consisting of the chair of the board, the commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, the president of the University of

Rhode Island, the president of Rhode Island College, and the president of the Community College of Rhode Island. The board is charged with submitting a plan to the governor and legislature for a permanent administrative structure for higher education. The board also must present a plan to distribute the assets, responsibilities, powers, authorities, and duties of the former Office of Higher Education to the three higher education institutions and state agencies.

Washington: Refocusing the State's Policy Coordinating Authorities

On July 1, 2012, the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board was disbanded; many of its statewide authorities were transferred to the newly created Washington Student Achievement Council. [Revised Code of Washington Title 28B, Chapter 77](#) stipulates that the council will consist of nine members. The governor appoints five of the members with the consent of the state senate. One of the citizen members must be a student, who serves for one year. In addition to gubernatorial appointees, each of Washington's four education sectors—K-12 education, community and technical colleges, universities, and the independent colleges—appoint a representative. All council members, except for the student member, serve for four-year terms.

The council is in the process of developing a “10-year roadmap” for higher education. The roadmap will guide the council's efforts to improve student outcomes by setting minimum admissions standards and pinpointing early transition points in which K-12 students struggle. The council has the authority for statewide planning and accountability, statewide admission and remedial placement policies, financial aid allocation, and research on student outcomes. The General Assembly in Washington affirmed that a duty of the council is to “represent the broad public interest above the interests of the individual institutions of higher education.”

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