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RE: Higher Education Coordinating Commission ("HECC")

Gentlemen:

We write this letter today in an effort to summarize the HECC experience and offer suggestions on the final refinements of the future HECC and funding. The HECC will be submitting a report.

As you know, the current HECC began July 1, 2012 and has been diligently meeting for the past eleven months, but without a budget. It has been an interesting experience.

**What we have learned:**

1. Higher education is very complex and rapidly changing. What works today may not work tomorrow. The HECC and Higher Education need to be nimble, flexible, and responsive.
2. Students, parents, and business will demand new and better solutions from Higher Education, including lowering cost.
3. One of the more promising ways that Oregon can meet the 40-40-20 benchmark is to encourage online degrees, cross institutional collaboration and course accreditation. However, there must be systems developed to assure quality and reliable outcomes.
4. Accreditation will change with the development of more discipline specific courses.

5. The HECC will require experienced and ample staffing to meet the anticipated workload proposed in HB 3120.
6. Degrees will change. Some degrees will become meaningless. There will be more demand for creativity and degrees that will provide immediate employment.
7. Oregon needs to complete a "gap analysis" which determines what need is not being met by existing institutions (OUS, community colleges, not for profits, and for profits). The analysis will provide information defining the gaps and answer how online courses help.
8. Competency/proficiency based approaches to higher education are emerging nationwide. This trend will continue in Oregon. The HECC will need to determine how to quantify the courses and have measurable outcomes.
9. The development of a more useful website for the Office of Degree Authorization (ODA) is important and must be completed promptly.
10. For a variety of reasons, ODA is not able to fulfill its responsibilities to higher education and must be funded and improved.
11. The new HECC needs to be appointed quickly. The existing HECC is a true lame duck.

#### **Structure of HECC:**

1. The new HECC must think outside the box and focus on outcomes. There needs to be a continued engagement with many groups that are impacted by the HECC. The HECC needs to develop relationships that welcome different perspectives. The challenge will be defining quality and quantity in a changing environment that will be largely market driven by students, parents, and employers. The HECC needs to understand the clear lines of authority and also not attempt to do too much too soon. What will be the priorities?
2. The new HECC will need capable staff and strong leadership. The HECC should have several working groups which will include constituency based representation.
3. Presently, no one knows for sure what the HECC will be. In any event, it will require a strong commitment from the HECC members and a great deal of time.

#### **Funding HECC:**

1. We write this letter in support of adequate funding of HECC. This year, the Commission had no funding. That becomes even more urgent in light of the expanded responsibilities for the new HECC.

2. HECC has accomplished a great deal this year, including the three studies (text book prices, credit for prior learning, Western Governor's University). We are currently preparing a report for the next HECC about what we have learned, our best advice, and issues which will be before the new commission.
3. Chief among our recommendations are the recognition of the rapidly changing nature of higher education, the need to lower/contain costs to students, and the 40-40-20 goal.
4. To accomplish these important tasks, HECC will require staff who are not only highly qualified but include enough positions to take on these important issues.
5. This year's HECC was assigned the responsibility of overseeing the Oregon Degree Authority (ODA). We have learned that ODA's work has expanded greatly as out-of-state institutions seek to bring online programs and courses into Oregon. This may entail the need for additional staff.
6. Funding and strong leadership, even in tight budget times, are required in recognition of the important tasks facing the Commission.

If we can help or answer questions, please ask.

Sincerely,

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