Policy Discussion: Measuring Up 2004

In September, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education published its third edition of the highly regarded and widely read Measuring Up report. Measuring Up 2004 provides a national report card for each of the 50 states on six indicators of higher education performance: preparation, participation, affordability, completion, benefits, and learning. Three aspects distinguish this report from previous volumes. First, Measuring Up 2004 presents historical information about each state’s performance over the past decade on each measure, where that information is available; this allows states to see how the have improved or lost ground over time. Second, the “grading” with respect to the affordability index was changed substantially to compare states with best “past” practices, rather than best “current” practices. The net effect of this change is that Measuring Up 2004 fails more than two-thirds of the states on this index, whereas only one-fifth of the states were given failing grades in the previous report. In the West, California received a “B,” Utah a “C,” Hawaii a “D,” and Colorado and Idaho a “D-”; the rest of the WICHE states were given failing grades. Third, Measuring Up 2004 continues to give 45 states “Incompletes” on student learning because there are no common benchmarks for learning to allow state comparisons; however, this year it does give five states a “+” on learning for having participated in a national Pew Charitable Trusts project on college-level learning. Nevada is the only WICHE state to receive a “+.”

Biographical Information on the Speaker

Patrick M. Callan, founding president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, will join the commission meeting to discuss Measuring Up 2004. Established in 1998 by a consortium of national foundations, the center is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose purpose is policy research and the promotion of public policies to enhance opportunities for high quality education and training beyond high school. From 1992 through 1997, Callan was executive director of the California Higher Education Policy Center; previous to this, he served as vice president of the Education Commission of the States, executive director of the California Postsecondary Education Commission, and in several other posts. He is coeditor of Public and Private Financing of Higher Education: Shaping Public Policy for the Future and coauthor of Designing State Higher Education Systems for a New Century, a study of state organization and governance of higher education. In 2001, he collaborated with Gene Maeroff and Michael Usdan on The Learning Connection, New Partnerships Between Schools and Colleges. He has served as an advisor to blue ribbon commissions, state education and higher education boards, governors’ offices, and legislative committees in many states. He served as a WICHE commissioner representing California from 1979 to 1986 and as chair of the commission from 1982 to 1983.