Monday, November 8, 2004

Issue Analysis and Research Committee

Jane Nichols (NV), chair
Ryan Deckert (OR), vice chair
Don Carlson (WA), ex officio
Diane Barrans (AK), ex officio

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Richard Bowen (ID)
Cindy Younkin (MT)
Ray Rawson (NV)
Letitia Chambers (NM)
Richard Kunkel (ND)
James Sager (OR)
Bob Burns (SD)
David Gladwell (UT)
Debora Merle (WA)
Tex Boggs (WY)

Presiding: Jane Nichols (NV), chair

Staff: Cheryl Blanco, director, Policy Analysis and Research
Sally Johnstone, director, WCET

Action Item: Issue Analysis and Research Committee
meeting minutes, May 17, 2004 8-3

Discussion Item: Changing Directions update and discussion 8-7

Discussion Item: Benchmarks Report presentation
(handout will be provided separately)

Information Item: Unit updates

1. WCET – Sally Johnstone
2. Policy Analysis and Research – Cheryl Blanco

Other business

Adjourn
Changing Direction examines how to structure financial aid and financing policies and practices to maximize participation, access, and success for all students. Designed around an integrated approach to restructuring appropriations, tuition, and financial aid policies and practices, Changing Direction’s overarching goal is better, more informed decision making on issues related to financial aid and financing in higher education. Over a multiyear period, the project is examining the socioeconomic-political environment in order to foster the kinds of major changes needed in the near future at multiple levels – campus, system, state, and national – and to initiate and promote those changes through public policy.

Changing Direction provides a venue for policymakers and educators from all regions of the country to critically examine strengths and weaknesses of public policies and develop new models by looking at emerging trends, their potential impact on higher education, and the policy implications related to issues of financial aid, finance, cost of education, and access. The project addresses current practices and policies, and emphasis is on exploring innovative, creative, perhaps untested approaches to national- and state-level challenges. While this necessarily involves all sources of assistance and financing – federal, state, local, and institutional – the project focuses on state policies and practices. Changing Direction serves policymakers in the legislative and executive branches of state government and their staffs, higher education researchers, state executive agencies, governing and coordinating boards, educators, college and university leaders, and business and corporate leaders.

WICHE and its partners – the Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council on Education (ACE), the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) – are exploring several financial aid and financing issues and the impact of public policy decisions, research, and practice. Among the key questions that the project is addressing are:

- How can policymakers at all levels – most particularly those at the state level – more effectively integrate tuition, financial aid, and appropriations policies in ways that promote student participation and completion?
- What kind of information and research is needed to strengthen policies and ensure their continuing effectiveness?
- How well do the policies and practices of the student-financing system serve the needs of different population groups? How do different population groups view the effectiveness of the current student-financing system?
- What are the implications of existing financing patterns for future policy improvements?
- What do current and near-term fiscal conditions mean for access to higher education, especially for low-income and underrepresented populations?
- How do financial aid and financing policies impact student retention at two- and four-year institutions?
- How do states establish an appropriate balance between direct support for high-quality educational programs and a level of financial assistance that enables students to participate in those programs?

Activities completed to date include a state financial aid, tuition, and appropriations policy and data inventory; a survey of state legislators on their perceptions of effective financial aid, tuition, and appropriations policies and practices; technical assistance to the five Changing Direction states selected through a competitive process; establishment of a national advisory board that developed a research agenda; and publication of research papers.

Changing Direction is expanding its scope to encompass the impact of revenue constraints on access and student retention and broader participation by the public two-year sector. Since policy change is a participative process that takes time to achieve, project resources are supporting individualized technical assistance through state roundtables, state case studies, and leadership institutes for legislators, executive office policy directors, trustees, and board members. Multistate forums are being convened to seek input from key stakeholders, disseminate information, and continue dialogue on regional and national issues. In addition, a national forum was held in June 2004. For more information about Changing Direction, please go to www.wiche.edu/Policy/Changing_Direction/index.htm.
ACTION ITEM
Issue Analysis and Research Committee Minutes
May 17, 2004

Members Present
Jane Nichols, chair (NV)
Cindy Younkin (MT)
Patricia Sullivan (NM)
Richard Kunkel (ND)
Robert Burns (SD)
Tex Boggs (WY)

Committee Members Absent
Johnny Ellis (AK)
Lawrence Gudis (AZ)
Francisco Hernandez (CA)
Tim Foster (CO)
Clyde Kodani (HI)
Richard Bowen (ID)
Ray Rawson (NV)
Ryan Deckert (OR)
David Gladwell (UT)
Debora Merle (WA)

Other Commissioners Present
Robert Moore (CA)
Bill Kuepper (CO)
Doris Ching (HI)
Gary Stivers (ID)
Don Carlson (WA)
Jim Sultan (WA)

Staff Present
David Longanecker, executive director
Cheryl Blanco
Sally Johnstone

Chair Jane Nichols convened the Issue Analysis and Research Committee on May 17, 2004. She noted a slight reorganization of the agenda item around the action item on the 2005 workplan. The minutes of the November 11, 2003, committee meeting were approved without revisions.

Moving to the first action item, Chair Nichols called on Cheryl Blanco to brief the committee on a new proposal titled Escalating Engagement: State Policy to Protect Access to Higher Education. Blanco indicated that staff would like to submit to this proposal the Ford Foundation; it has been presented as an information item to the Executive Committee. The proposed project will continue our emphasis on building and sustaining capacity among state policymakers to address issues in higher education. WICHE’s overall goals for Escalating Engagement is to increase access to higher education for all students, but most particularly those from low-income families and underrepresented groups; to strengthen accountability; and to expand our workforce initiative. This project will accelerate the dialogue and activities used to strengthen state policymaking in higher education around three issues:

1. First dollar for access – As economies recover, it is essential that we invest new monies in protecting access for underrepresented and low-income students. Financial access should be the preeminent consideration for state policymakers as revenues begin to grow again.

2. Accountability to respond to state priorities for persistence and success – Higher education enrollment figures indicate that both the numbers and proportions of low-income and underrepresented groups have increased. Where we have been less than effective in higher education is in retention to graduation. Accountability in higher education must be linked, at least in part, to performance in responding to state priorities for persistence and success.

3. Preparing our own talent – Workforce concerns during this “jobless recovery” and economic development in resource-strapped states are high on the agenda of policymakers. A central issue here is how to maximize local resources since most states can no longer afford to buy talent from other states. State residents should have ready access to education and training in order to fill local employment opportunities, which will avoid putting business and industry in the position of importing talent.
Christopher Morphew, associate professor at the University of Kansas, described a 19-month study he is conducting into the future of high school graduates by state, income, and race/ethnicity. This study, which examines the utility and promise of interstate student exchange agreements, aims to address a number of questions: Who benefits from student interstate migration patterns? What evidence is there that student interstate migration patterns serve states’ diverse higher education and economic needs? What political/policy factors contribute to student interstate migration patterns? Morphew reported on preliminary results of a pilot of the survey; in fall 2004, he will launch the full survey of WUE students. Findings from the study will be directed toward how state and regional policies might be constructed to allow states to share their finite higher education resources and maintain or even increase student access to public higher education resources.

Commissioners had a number of questions and comments. Commissioner Stivers raised a concern about FERPA (Family Education Right to Privacy Act) requirements. Morphew explained that this had been an issue in many of the states where he requested data, but the study does not violate FERPA rules and most states were cooperating. Commissioner Boggs disagreed, but indicated that the Wyoming Community College Commission had taken responsibility for reporting the data. Commissioner Nichols suggested that in the future the request come from WICHE directly in order to increase responses from the states. Commissioner Burns asked if the fall 2004 study would include WUE students from all 15 WICHE states; Morphew reported that it was his hope to achieve full participation. Responding to a question from Commissioner Moore, Morphew listed several states that have low or no assistance: Washington, Arizona, Oregon, Nevada, and New Mexico. He is still negotiating with South Dakota on the FERPA issue. Commissioner Nichols suggested that Morphew let the WICHE commissioner know what is happening in each of their states. Morphew will provide a full report to the commission upon completion of the study.

Chair Nichols asked the committee to turn to the FY 2005 workplan proposed for the Policy Analysis and Research unit and the WCET. Blanco reviewed the organization of the workplan, with five issue areas – access, finance, information and innovation, accountability, and workforce – and activities listed within three broad categories: “Existing Activities,” “New Directions,” and “On the Horizon.” After reviewing the unit’s major activities within each issue area, Blanco asked if these are the “right” issue areas for the unit. Commissioner Sulton raised concern that it appeared the diversity discussion has been “off the table.” If that is the case, he stated that it is a glaring omission. Commissioner Nichols noted that the Nevada Board of Regents felt that the idea of “access” was not enough and added the word “diversity” to its work. Johnstone suggested that in the evolution of this list of issues, the need to reduce the number of issues may have led to diversity being left off. Commissioner Sulton replied that if that is what occurred, it should be undone. Commissioner Younkin asked if it is a matter of semantics or not addressing the issues. Commissioner Sulton replied that it is both and includes faculty, staff, curriculum, and students. Commissioner Burns suggested that if diversity-related projects were under other issues, perhaps we should pull those out under diversity. Commissioner Ching suggested that if we have diversity with access, perhaps that would give it enough focus. Chair Nichols concluded that this concern should be presented to the full commission. Commissioner Burns moved to approve the workplan; following a second by Commissioner Younkin, the item was approved unanimously.
Chair Nichols asked Sally Johnstone to update the committee on the activities of the WCET. Johnstone gave a brief overview of WCET’s major activities. She reported that:

- WCET’s 250 members, located in 43 states and five countries, include universities, colleges, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporations.

- WCET’s organizational structure includes:
  - Steering Committee - representatives from WICHE states plus three regions of the U.S. and international members;
  - Executive Board - members elected from full membership.

- WCET’s primary sources of funding are grants and contracts, conferences, and membership dues.

- WCET’s latest project areas include web-based student service audits, research on learning repository software, and the creation of an online course for users of the Technology Costing Methodology products.

- The second edition of the Distance Learner’s Guide has just been published by Prentice Hall.

In addition, Johnstone gave an overview of WCET’s work with the United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization in the area of Open Educational Resources.

Since there was no time remaining for the committee meeting, Chair Nichols asked Blanco to briefly comment on the Benchmarks Report and the policy unit’s work. Blanco said that the benchmark work would be discussed at the Committee of the Whole and returned to the committee before the November commission meeting. For additional information on the unit’s work, Blanco directed members to the handout in the agenda book, showing major activities for each of the five issue areas.

In closing, Commissioner Boggs asked that in the future the committee have additional and sufficient time to discuss the issues raised on the agenda. Others agreed. The committee adjourned.
In November 2001, WICHE launched Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policy, a project funded by Lumina Foundation for Education. Our primary partners in this initiative are State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), the Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council on Education (ACE), and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

The purpose of Changing Direction is to examine how to structure financial aid and financing policies and practices to maximize participation, access, and success for all students. The project addresses current practices and policies, with emphasis on exploring innovative, creative, perhaps untested approaches to national- and state-level challenges. A key goal is to achieve an integrated state policymaking framework and process so that policies related to tuition, financial aid, and appropriations are coordinated, occur in an environment of collaboration, and support state goals for higher education.

In addition to national and multistate regional policy forums, roundtables, commissioned papers, and other activities, Changing Direction provides direct technical assistance to a limited number of states. Through a competitive process, 10 states have been selected to receive technical assistance to explore and implement innovative ways of improving the policymaking framework at the state level. Brief descriptions and contact information for these states follow.

- **Arizona** – The Arizona Board of Regents is conducting a series of meetings and associated activities to increase state-funded, need-based financial aid; strengthen the role of higher education in workforce development through new or modified state appropriations mechanisms; and work with the state universities on financing and financial aid strategies to increase access and graduation rates. Contact: Stephanie Jacobsen, assistant executive director of academic affairs, Arizona Board of Regents, 2020 North Central Avenue, Suite 230, Phoenix, AZ 85004; phone, 602-229-2529; stephanie.jacobsen@asu.edu.

- **Connecticut** – The Connecticut Department of Higher Education continues to examine the state’s tuition and fee policy to ensure consistency in the definition and treatment of tuition and fees for policy purposes and explore the development of a more reliable and comprehensive student financial aid database to better assess the adequacy of student financial aid levels. Contact: Dr. Mary Johnson, associate commissioner, Finance & Administration, Connecticut Department of Higher Education, 61 Woodland Street, Hartford, CT 06105; phone, 860-947-1848; mkjohnson@ctdhe.org.

- **Florida** – The Florida Council for Education Policy, Research and Improvement (CEPRI) is updating and expanding its web-based tool and cohort analysis with a focus on financial aid and its impact on student progression. Contact: Dr. Patrick Dallet, deputy executive director, Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement, The Florida Legislature, Room 574, 111 West Madison Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1400; phone, 850-488-7703; dallet.patt@leg.state.fl.us.

- **Hawaii** – The University of Hawaii System is working with key policymakers to develop a working knowledge of the issues surrounding state appropriations, tuition setting, and financial aid as they relate to access and retention; create a set of shared principles as guidelines for long-term planning and budgeting for the university system; construct a draft of the next five-year tuition schedule, including a plan for increases in need-based financial aid;
and generate support in the legislature for a state-supported financial aid program benefiting residents attending public postsecondary institutions. Contact: Dr. Linda Johnsrud, interim vice president for planning and policy, University of Hawaii, Bachman Hall, Room 110A, 2444 Dole Street, Honolulu, HI 96822; phone, 808-956-7075; johnsrud@hawaii.edu.

- **Idaho** – The Idaho State Board of Education is building consensus among key policy and educational leaders, businesses, philanthropies, and students and their families on the factors involved in financial support for a college education; completing a review and inventory of finance policies; and improving collaboration in aligning tuition and financial aid policies in state appropriations decisions. Contact: Nancy Szofran, chief technology officer, State Board of Education, PO Box 83720, Boise, ID 38720; phone, 208-334-2270; nszofran@osbe.state.id.us.

- **Louisiana** – The Louisiana Board of Regents is working with the legislature to broaden the scope of the requirements of recent legislation to include financial aid and postsecondary education financial issues and to develop a framework for analyzing various policy options and relationships related to financial issues. Contact: Donnie Vandal, deputy commissioner for administration, Louisiana Board of Regents, PO Box 3677, Baton Rouge, LA 70821; phone, 225-342-4253; dvandal@regents.state.la.us.

- **Missouri** – The Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education and the Department of Higher Education are implementing improvements for the delivery and distribution of state grants and scholarships and developing strategies to implement the recommendations of The Commission on the Future of Higher Education related to participation and financial aid. Contact: Debra Cheshier, director, Educational Policy, Planning and Improvement Center, Missouri Department of Higher Education, 3515 Amazonas, Jefferson City, MO 65109; phone, 573-751-2361; john.wittstruck@dhe.mo.gov.

- **Oklahoma** – The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education is conducting a series of meetings and associated activities to pursue adequate funding for the higher education system, the institutions, and the students, while identifying systemwide efficiencies and strategic priorities to maximize higher education’s resources. Contact: Dr. Dolores Mize, associate vice chancellor, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 655 Research Parkway, Suite 200, Oklahoma City, OK 73104; phone, 405-524-9196; dmize@osrhe.edu.

- **Oregon** – The Oregon University System is focusing on affordability of postsecondary education for Oregon students, particularly low-income and underrepresented students. The result of this project should be an understanding of the information needed to monitor affordability policies and their impacts on Oregon public postsecondary enrollment, institutional commitment to a realistic level of data or database development, and a plan to implement a program of ongoing accountability for affordability at the state, board, and institution levels. Contact: Dr. David McDonald, director, Enrollment and Student Services, Oregon University System, PO Box 3175, Eugene, OR 97403-0175; phone, 541-346-5729; David_McDonald@ous.edu.

- **Tennessee** – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission is working to raise the awareness of policymakers regarding the importance of linking appropriations and fee determinations with student aid levels; develop a new statewide master plan; and restructure its long-standing funding formula so that it will be more responsive to statewide policies and goals. Contact: Dr. Brian Noland, associate executive director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 404 James Robertson Parkway, Parkway Towers, Suite 1900, Nashville, TN 37243; phone, 615-741-3862; Brian.Noland@state.tn.us.

**WICHE Contacts**: Dr. Cheryl D. Blanco, project director and director of Policy Analysis and Research, or Demarée Michelau, project coordinator, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, PO Box 9752, Boulder, CO 80301; phone, 303-541-0221; fax, 303-541-0291; cblanco@wiche.edu or dmichelau@wiche.edu. Also see WICHE’s website at www.wiche.edu/Policy/Changing_direction.