Monday, November 10, 2008

3.30 - 5.30 pm
Courtroom K

Issue Analysis and Research Committee Meeting

Jane Nichols (NV), committee chair
Ryan Deckert (OR), committee vice chair
Roy Ogawa (HI), ex officio
Camille Preus (OR), ex officio

Patricia Brown Heller (AK)
David Lorenz (AZ)
Position vacant (CA)
Kaye Howe (CO)
Roberta Richards (HI)
Arthur Vailas (ID)
Dan Harrington (MT)
Warren Hardy (NV)
Committee chair (NV)
Reed Dasenbrock (NM)
Pamela Kostelecky (ND)
Committee vice chair (OR)
Robert Burns (SD)
Bonnie Jean Beesley (UT)
Jeanne Kohl-Welles (WA)
Debbie Hammons (WY)

Agenda

Presiding: Jane Nichols, chair

Staff: Brian Prescott, director of policy research,
       Policy Analysis and Research
       Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis,
       Policy Analysis and Research (unable to attend)

Guest: Patrick Kelly, senior associate, National Center
       for Higher Education Management Systems

Approval of the Issue Analysis and Research Committee meeting minutes
of May 19, 2008 8-3

Approval of changes to the FY 2009 Policy Analysis and Research workplan 8-7

Approval to receive and expend funds to host a meeting on expanding the pipeline of students of
color in the health professions 8-8
Discussion Items:

Proposed project on select Western states’ participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s education data collection and analysis

Proposed project with the Association for the Study of Higher Education’s Institute on Equity and Critical Policy Analysis to focus greater attention on race and equity in the study of higher education.

Information Items:

New hires (biographies as a separate handout)

Inequality and Productivity in Higher Education – Patrick Kelly, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (two papers – “Beyond Social Justice: The Threat of Inequality to Workforce Development in the Western United States” – as separate documents) 8-10

Unit update – Brian Prescott

Other business

Adjournment
Chair Jane Nichols convened the Issue Analysis and Research Committee on May 19, 2008, and a quorum was established.

COMMISSIONER DASENBROCK MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 5, 2007, ISSUE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING. COMMISSIONER BURNS SECONDED THE MOTION. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Nichols introduced Terese Rainwater from the State Scholars Initiative, here to talk about the policy brief she cowrote with Dolores Mize, titled “Education Beyond the Rhetoric: Making ‘Rigor’ Something Real.” Rainwater explained that this brief aligns with WICHE’s efforts to improve access and success to higher education. The State Scholars Initiative (SSI) also works toward this goal through its involvement with the business community, as well as by looking at student outcome data and state policy efforts to see whether students have an opportunity to take a rigorous course of study in high school. She noted that this paper flows out of those efforts and served as the foundation for the SSI National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance.

Rainwater and Mize decided to write the paper – originally intended as a meta-analysis – on the definition of academic rigor because they could find very little agreement on this. They started by looking at ACT’s definition of academic rigor: the content and quality of courses available. The paper expands on that definition by adding a standard/measure of rigor that can be used at any level (school, state, national).

The summit gave the 36 participating states an opportunity to think about rigor and to plan how to carry out their ideas. The goal of rigor is not to make kids work harder just for hardness’s sake but to improve the quality of courses and connect them with their future endeavors. Rainwater found that states which have moved to a default curriculum may not be as rigorous as expected. For example, some states require three years of math, which includes one year of algebra 1A and one year of algebra 1B. She stated that this takes students to their junior year of high school before geometry and algebra 2 are taken. Rainwater noted that the publications “Answers in the Toolbox” and “The Toolbox Revisited” provide evidence of the need for all students to complete algebra 2 before they graduate from high
school. The purpose of SSI is to encourage and support students who could benefit from completing a more rigorous course of study, those students in the middle 50 percent who we know can learn but who do not see themselves as "scholars."

Kay Howe asked if there was a pedagogical aspect of the proposed curriculum. Rainwater answered yes, quality matters. She noted that the curriculum that is being suggested is just 15.5 credits a year. This provides a solid knowledge and skills base while allowing about 15 credits that a student can use to take other courses. Howe wondered what their definition of rigor was. Rainwater explained that they went back several years in the literature and determined that rigor should be measured by the content and quality of the courses. To gauge if we are successful, she suggested a new standard. This standard comes from Roy Romer’s initiative “Strong American Schools,” which suggests that we benchmark the achievement to the top 10 best-performing countries in the world.

Pamela Kostelecky asked if this rigorous curriculum is preparing students for the workforce. Reed Dasenbrock responded that the core of the ACT discussion is that the skills are the same. Rainwater explained that career and technical education and the academic path are perceived as far apart, but they are not. The Office of Vocational and Adult Education has an interest in demonstrating that these two areas are not as far apart as they may seem. Kostelecky asked how North Dakota could present a program of rigor through the secondary schools so that the community colleges do not seem like they are turning people away. Rainwater explained that there is a long-standing conflict between rigor and access and that there is a need to reframe the discussion to see those two as working together. She pointed out that K-12 schools really take their cues from higher education; and in states that define rigor strictly, K-12 follows suit; but it may not match what other states are doing. At the summit Roy Romer offered his experience in Los Angeles, in which he oversaw a $22 billion process of building the necessary schools and classrooms and hiring teachers. He defined rigor as one specific course of study for all students and was able to increase student scores. Rainwater explained that they ended their paper with a choice: either the United States can get embroiled in the details of why “rigor” is not the right word, or it can decide to set a goal – to become one of the top 10 performing countries in the world. Howe questioned how to make a rigorous course of study available for all kinds of kids. She added that there is a report that sends a message that mathematics does not have to do with being good at mathematics but with the effort that one puts into math. She sees this as a subtle shift from previous thinking. Rainwater stated that if you don’t tell kids what to take, they won’t take it.

Jane Nichols added that the impact is not on the children of college graduates. Different projects are trying to make the high school degree show that the student has certain skills that we can count on, which is what the business community wants to see. The SSI project is starting to find data that is indicative of this need. Rainwater added that there is both qualitative and quantitative data from SSI pilot school districts and states—perception data and student-level outcome data—summarized for them in the agenda book. However, they found that data is largely used for administrative purposes, rather than for educational purposes. For example, it is not possible to find out how many kids are taking a given class.

Nichols asked what is going to happen when the funding for the project runs out. Rainwater answered that it is a daily activity to determine how to sustain the project. Currently, SSI has been extended from a two-year project to an almost four-year project. Given the change of administration at the federal level, SSI is probably not going to get federal funding past April 2009. Nichols asked if they will try to continue, with private funding. Rainwater answered that WICHE staff were exploring different options.

David Longanecker added that it is a good time to talk about the options for sustainability. One option is to see if SSI can continue its funding federally. This is not likely because it has been funded by the secretary of education’s discretionary funds, which are limited. He stated that we could align with the new president’s priorities, but the new president rarely chooses the priorities of the previous president. There is a possibility that we can find somebody in Congress to try to get to the vice president, who can add earmarks for funding. Both Wyoming senators are former WICHE commissioners. The other option, which is more likely, is a transition to private funding. SSI currently has two proposals out. There would be some benefits of not being under the government’s control. Maybe WICHE should not shoot for long-term funding but look for two-year funding to test the longevity of the program and to be able to make the case for the future (or not).

Nichols proposed to change the order of the agenda to approve the 2009 workplan after it has been introduced. David Longanecker explained that the unit is very busy and that there is not much room with current employee
capacity to expand the workplan. If the commission has any ideas beyond what is currently proposed, the unit would have to get new funding to add staff.

Brian Prescott discussed several ongoing projects, beginning with the annual *Tuition and Fees* report. WICHE has been collecting this data for two decades, and this year was no different than before, with one minor addition. The last survey asked institutions if they charged differential tuition, based on upper/lower division or academic program. Prescott added that we are always looking for ways to improve the publication.

Prescott described a second ongoing project, *Benchmarks*, a series of reports which are intended to show how the West is progressing in improving access to, success in, and financing of higher education. This year, the publication shows some improvement for racial/ethnic groups. These groups are receiving an increased amount of need-based help. This is happening at a time when college has become more expensive and the nation has gotten wealthier.

The *Fact Book* was another project described by Prescott: an online publication which contains 61 different data tables that present regional as well as state-by-state data, with analyses on several fiscal, demographic, economic, and social indicators important to policymakers, educators, and researchers in the West. These indicators are updated periodically as new data become available. If other kinds of data are wanted, it should be brought to our attention, and we will work to provide that information.

Prescott moved on to a substantial activity that the unit has just completed, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992 to 2022*. Many of the projections that were made in the 2003 edition of the publication were reasonably accurate, but as we move forward, he would like to make the publication more useful to states. Prescott sees an interest in breaking down the data by metropolitan areas (he has been speaking about this publication at a lot of meetings). Longanecker added that there is a proposed study in the workplan to bring in national demographers to evaluate our methods and data and to make sure we are using the best possible solutions for our projections. He would also like to make the data more dynamic, so states are able to see “what would happen if ….” This would involve creating an online database, where states could simulate or manipulate the data. WICHE currently has a proposal out to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on this.

Prescott commented on the conclusion of the *Escalating Engagement* project, funded by the Ford Foundation: a three-year grant scheduled to close at the end of June but given a short extension through September 2008. This project works to improve access for historically underrepresented groups and to sharpen the role of higher education in state workforce development and economic development. WICHE recently held a large meeting in Lake Tahoe to learn more about workforce certification systems in higher education. As the grant wraps up, the unit is trying to think of ways to sustain the effort around workforce development by seeking additional funding.

Over the past couple of years, Prescott has worked alongside Longanecker on a project with Oregon to redesign their financial aid program and implement the redesign. Reed Dasenbrock mentioned that New Mexico is having problems with data reporting on merit-based financial aid. The central piece of the aid is the merit-based lottery scholarship. He questioned if there is any possibility of addressing merit- versus need-based aid. Prescott answered yes, but it is hard to do. States are not collecting data annually, which makes it difficult to compare one state to another.

Nichols next turned the time over to Demi Michelau. Michelau reminded commissioners about a project that was brought to their attention in November, *Non-Traditional No More*, which has been funded by a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education. The goal of this project is to identify adults who are close to completing a degree and help them return to college. The project is national in scope, and there has been a competitive application process. Ten states applied, and WICHE was able to choose three states: Arkansas, Colorado, and Nevada. The unit is currently talking with Lumina about funding two more states in six months, after we have learned from the initial process with the first three states. Longanecker added that there is not going to be another RFP process for the new states, but that he would like to be able to choose from the three “good” states that were not funded. Michelau said that there were two states who were interested in buying their way into the program. The unit is working with the three current states on five different areas: data, academic affairs, financial aid/financing, student support services, and communications. Each state is going to hold its own meeting to figure out how they are going to get the work done; and then in October, WICHE will convene state team leaders to discuss challenges and strategies for success. Longanecker said one challenge is that most states want to find alumni and bring them back because most of the people in the state are not the ones who went to school in that state. Dasenbrock asked if they could use WICHE ICE
to track a student’s course background. Longnecker said that would work and that they may also team with some lead institutions who could go to creditors and see where students have moved.

Michelau described a current partnership with the Pathways to College Network. WICHE has recently received money from them and Jobs for the Future as part of the Making Opportunity Affordable initiative, which will be used to make major improvements to the SPIPO database. WICHE hopes to make the Website more interactive and user-friendly and to give it a better interface. The unit will also work to combine it with the Policy Publications Clearinghouse, a compiled list of studies, reports, surveys, and policy briefs published by various research and public policy organizations. Howe asked if it’s currently possible to search across the documents; Michelau said not yet, but that should be addressed in the upgrades. Nichols remarked that it would be a great idea to do a grand unveiling of the database once it is finished to the different higher education groups. Longanecker added that the unit has had a hard time informing people about the database. He knows that people who use it are true believers, but he is surprised that many people don’t know about it. Michelau noted that she is already scheduled to speak at some meetings about this topic.

Nichols turned the time over to Longanecker. He discussed the Making Opportunity Affordable grant, which is a $25 million grant from Lumina to work with five states on three different areas, looking at ways to radically increase the productivity of students and the access and success of students. Thirty-seven states competed to participate, and they have currently narrowed it down to 11. Four of the states are Western states: Arizona, Colorado, Montana, and Nevada.

Longanecker described another current grant, the College Access Challenge Grant. This is a new federal grant, where each state gets money if they make a proposal. WICHE will help manage the grant and the proposal process, reserving a bulk of the funds for grant management. Four states were needed to make it viable: Utah, Idaho, South Dakota, and Wyoming. WICHE expects that these four states will pay WICHE $60,000 to help write their grant applications and administer their programs.

Longanecker described some work with the Mental Health Program that is not currently on the workplan but is on the horizon, related to working with correctional facilities on education. Nichols added that she thinks it is a great idea, but they would have a hard time convincing policymakers in Nevada that the prison population needed to be talked to.

Nichols asked if there are any questions for the staff or suggestions for the workplan. Dasenbrock asked if Longnecker is worried about staff burnout and if there is enough clear prioritization. Longanecker answered that he is comfortable with what has been presented. He agrees that it is aggressive, but it is really focused in five areas of the WICHE mission. If anything is added to the agenda, however, the unit will need to increase staff, and funding would be needed for that.

DAVE LORENZ MOVED TO ACCEPT THE WORKPLAN AS PROPOSED. ROBERTA ROBERTS SECONDED THE MOTION. It was approved unanimously.

Nichols adjourned the meeting.
ACTION ITEM
Changes to the FY 2009 Policy Analysis and Research Workplan

Summary
The Policy Analysis and Research unit proposes to make several changes to the FY 2009 Policy Analysis and Research workplan, corresponding with a staffing change in the unit.

Relationship to WICHE Mission
This project directly relates to the activities WICHE will pursue in its efforts to fulfill its mission.

Background
Several activities that became a part of the workplan were related to specific interests Dolores Mize brought to the Policy Analysis and Research unit. Now that Mize has moved on, the time has come to adjust the workplan to remove those activities that WICHE no longer plans to pursue.

Project Description
The Policy Analysis and Research unit proposes the following changes to the FY 2009 Policy Analysis and Research workplan:

- Under Access & Success, delete the plan to bid on the federal GEAR UP program national evaluation contract.
- Under Access & Success, delete the plan to examine the impact of college access programs on state policy (which was in partnership with the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships and the National Conference of State Legislatures).
- Under Accountability, delete the plan to create a Research Insights series.
- Delete references to departed staff member’s involvement on external advisory boards.

Staff and Fiscal Impact
These proposed deletions will better align the workplan with available staff resources.

Action Requested
Approval to make the changes specified above to the FY 2009 Policy Analysis and Research workplan.
ACTION ITEM
Expanding the Pipeline of Students of Color in the Health Professions

Summary
WICHE proposes to convene a meeting in an effort to expand the pipeline of students of color into the health professions. The meeting will bring together representatives from the two- and four-year sectors in eight WICHE states: Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. Also involved in the meeting will be representatives from the health sciences centers that are located in those states. The meeting will be designed to stimulate the creation of partnerships and agreements to smooth the pathways into a pre-health curriculum at a community college and on through a four-year institution and into a postgraduate training program at one of the health sciences centers. Since not all states have academic health sciences centers, the approach will be regional.

The meeting will also have two cosponsors: the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, which will provide the meeting facilities at the Anschutz Medical Campus; and the Sullivan Alliance to Transform America’s Health Professions. Located in Washington, D.C., the Sullivan Alliance is led by Louis Sullivan, former U.S. secretary of health and human services, and Lonnie Bristow, former president of the American Medical Association; it works to promote racial and ethnic diversity among health professionals and to reduce racial/ethnic-based gaps in access to healthcare.

Relationship to WICHE Mission
This project directly supports WICHE’s mission to promote access to high-skill, high-wage jobs among underrepresented populations and to meet the demand for a skilled workforce.

Background
The meeting was proposed as part of a larger national effort to promote greater diversity in the health professions workforce. As our population becomes ever more diverse, it has become increasingly important that the health professions better reflect that diversity in order to provide better service to those in need of healthcare, as well as to open the well-paying jobs available through the health professions to the wider population.

The Sullivan Alliance was founded to work toward diversifying the health professions, and it has been responsible for building one model for success in this effort: the Virginia-Nebraska Alliance. That project has created partnerships among the historically black colleges and universities of Virginia and other institutions and the health sciences centers in Virginia and Nebraska through a variety of innovative programs. This meeting will offer to participating states and institutions the lessons provided by the Virginia-Nebraska Alliance, as well as an opportunity to craft other solutions to the problem of widening the pipeline of students of color into fields leading to employment in the health professions. In particular, WICHE hopes one outcome of the meeting will be to build partnerships among two-year colleges, four-year institutions, and health sciences centers that have at their core a clearly articulated pathway for students of color to follow through all three sectors. This would provide students with a roadmap for how they could embark upon a career in the health professions.

WICHE hopes that this meeting will provide a promising model for training a more diverse health professions workforce that could be exported to other geographic regions. If so, WICHE will likely look ahead to hosting similar meetings in WICHE states not represented at this meeting.

Project Description
The primary goal of the proposed meeting is to engage the sectors of higher education in an effort to diversify the health professions. Should this meeting successfully improve policies and practices in this regard, WICHE will likely seek to develop similar efforts involving its other member states.
Staff and Fiscal Impact
Most of the meeting costs will be met through the fundraising efforts of the Sullivan Alliance. The staff effort for this initial meeting will be provided as a service to the participating states, if funds are not available to cover those costs. Staff from multiple units within WICHE will be involved in several aspects of the meeting, including planning for logistics and meeting content and facilitating during the meeting.

Action Requested
Approval to receive and expend funds to support WICHE’s involvement in the coordination and convening of a meeting to advance policies and practices that help to expand the pipeline of students of color into the health professions workforce.
INFORMATION ITEM
Inequality and Productivity in Higher Education

Patrick Kelly of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems will speak on two papers: “Beyond Social Justice: The Threat of Inequality to Workforce Development in the Western United States” and “The Dreaded ‘P’ Word: An Examination of Productivity in Public Postsecondary Education” (papers as separate documents).

Biographical Information on the Speaker
Patrick Kelly is a senior associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). He also serves as director of the NCHEMS Information Center for State Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis (located at www.higheredinfo.org) and works on many projects, applying research and policy analysis to link higher education with the critical needs of states and their residents. He presents his work to a variety of audiences, including higher education researchers and policy analysts, state higher education executive officers and their staffs, and other state policymakers.