

Summary of Items Recommended for Consideration

Provided below are items to be considered for implementing changes to the Commission on Higher Education. The purpose of these changes is to provide a framework for the Commission to be able to strengthen its planning role for the development of statewide goals and focus on a public agenda for the state's most pressing needs and priorities. These items create an accountability model, funding pools, funding methodology and a strengthened Commission to address the opportunities outlined in the Foundations for the Future Study.

1. Charge the Commission with the responsibility of creating an accountability program that would provide information on A) the assessment of all public institutions with respect to achievement of statewide goals and objectives, B) all public institutions with respect to institutionally determined goals and objectives approved by respective Boards of Trustees, C) the Commission on Higher Education with respect to its achievement of its mandated responsibilities related to statewide planning, and D) all public institutions with respect to the quality of academic programs. Further, higher education institutions and the Commission should be exempted from other accountability requirements existing in statute (codification of existing proviso – 72.50).
2. Create a funding pool within the Commission's budget to be used toward statewide projects, encouragement of collaboration between public and private higher education institutions for economic development priorities, or the achievement of statewide goals (e.g. statewide software licenses and electronic library).
3. Eliminate the requirement to base public institutional funding entirely on performance on specified indicators and revise the Commission's authority to reduce, expand, close, or consolidate institutions. Further, charge the Commission with the responsibility for revising the higher education funding methodology so that it will appropriately determine the needs of the public institutions, serve as a basis for appropriations requests to the General Assembly and allocation of resulting appropriations, and insure an equitable distribution of state provided resources.
4. Consolidate code sections in order to simplify the institutional data reporting requirements for purposes of annual accountability. Also, eliminate references to critical success factors and performance indicators.
5. Provide the Commission with the explicit authority:
 - a. for the creation of an Academic Program Review process, to be funded with annual appropriations. For this process, the Commission would conduct external, objective reviews of the state's Research and Four-year Colleges and Universities academic programs so as to insure quality of the educational offerings across the state;
 - b. to terminate those academic programs that are non-productive, unnecessarily duplicative, or excessively costly. Further, additional authority should be provided to withhold funding from public institutions that operate academic programs that have not been approved by the Commission;
 - c. to approve the creation of any new public institution of higher education and to withhold funding from any public institution that operates outside of their approved mission and degree granting authority; and
 - d. to approve all capital projects proposed by public institutions and to rank those projects with respect to overall priority whenever capital projects may be considered by the General Assembly.
6. Restructure the Commission through the addition of two members (State Superintendent of Education and The Secretary of Commerce) and by changing the status of the representative of the independent colleges and universities from non-voting to voting. These changes would improve, strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the Commission through a broadened perspective and direct linkages with relevant agencies. Commission member experience requirements should be revised and ongoing training requirements should be added to strengthen the qualifications of Commission members.