

Proposed Legislation to Implement the Creation of the West Virginia Office of Postsecondary Education

Executive Summary

The Governor has charged the Blue Ribbon Commission on Four Year Higher Education to recommend policies, structure and organization to improve four year higher education in the State of West Virginia. In particular, the Commission is charged with recommending policies that support keeping schools in communities with institutional local governing boards, and that support mission differentiation, particularly service, research and innovation. The Commission appointed a Governance Subcommittee to perform the following duties set forth in the Governor's Charge:

- Examine policies and governance structures to provide institutions with the ability to streamline administrative services to increase quality, create potential economies of scale and scope, including provision of services by a central providing entity.
- Examine policies that facilitate compatibility and alignment among the institutions and any central service-providing body.
- Examine policies that enhance the value and ability of four year institutions to provide high quality instruction, community outreach, economic development as well as research and creative discovery within the scope of each institution's mission.
- Examine methods used in other states to restructure higher education.

In accordance with the Governor's Charge, the Governance Subcommittee has reviewed the current governance structure for four year higher education provided through the Higher Education Policy Commission, researched options for the optimal delivery of services and support to four year institutions and received the input of the State's four year institutions regarding their needs for services to be provided through a central service-providing body. Based upon this research and analysis, the Governance Subcommittee has developed the following recommendations:

- The State shall establish the Office of Postsecondary Education ("OPE") which will replace the current Higher Education Policy Commission.
- OPE's purpose will be to (1) enhance access for West Virginians to high quality, low cost postsecondary educational opportunities; (2) provide maximum flexibility for individual institutions to operate; (3) maximize the stability of the legal environment for West Virginia higher education; (4) promote efficiency of operations for all institutions; and (5) encourage cross-campus collaboration.
- The specific responsibilities of OPE will be to (1) provide shared services in a cost-effective manner upon the request of the public state colleges and universities and the

community and technical colleges; and (2) coordinate academic programs at state colleges and universities.

- Based upon the input from the State's four year institutions, OPE will provide any of the following shared services to those public institutions which request such services:
 - (1) Financial aid training for high school counselors and other citizens providing financial aid advice to high school students;
 - (2) Administration of reciprocity agreements with higher education institutions and agencies in other states;
 - (3) Support for college completion initiatives;
 - (4) Online curriculum quality improvement;
 - (5) Institutional data management and reporting, including response to legislative requests for data;
 - (6) Health science education and workforce development initiatives, including the Rural Health Initiative and the Rural Health Residency Program;
 - (7) Support for the GEAR UP initiative;
 - (8) Support for veterans education and training programs;
 - (9) Support for College Foundation of West Virginia student recruitment and support initiatives;
 - (10) Joint purchasing initiatives;
 - (11) Preparation of legislative fiscal notes;
 - (12) Bond administration;
 - (13) Preparation of budgets for the operation of the Office;
 - (14) Preparation of audits;
 - (15) Implementation of OASIS system;
 - (16) Administration of employee benefits system;
 - (17) Software support for human resource functions;
 - (18) Technical assistance for statutorily required classification and compensation systems;
 - (19) Information technology systems;
 - (20) Clearinghouse for external (federal and private) grants;

- (21) Training and development initiatives for members of the governing boards at West Virginia's four-year public institutions of higher education; and
 - (22) Such other services as OPE's board of managers may determine are necessary for the Office to achieve its mission.
- OPE will also provide any of the shared services enumerated above to private institutions of higher education in the State upon request in accordance with a fee structure to be established annually by OPE's board of managers.
 - OPE will be overseen and operated by a ten-member board of managers, to be comprised of one appointee from each one of the State's four year public institutions. The appointee will be selected by the respective governing board of each institution, except that the appointee must be someone other than the president of the institution. The three members appointed by the Exempted Schools (WVU, Marshall and the School of Osteopathic Medicine) shall be entitled to vote on all matters before the board of managers, other than matters pertaining to academic programs at any of the state colleges and universities.
 - OPE will have a director to be selected by the board of managers and will employ those staff persons necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the office.
 - OPE will review and approve academic programs for governing boards at state colleges and universities, except for Exempted Schools, in the same manner that HEPC currently acts.
 - Except for the specific responsibilities of OPE as outlined herein, all other responsibility for governance and operation of the public institutions of higher education shall remain with the governing boards of each respective institution.

With the input and direction of all of the public four year institutions, OPE will be well-positioned to support our public colleges and universities to enhance the access and quality of postsecondary education in West Virginia in a more efficient, cost-effective and collaborative manner, while providing institutions with the maximum amount of authority and flexibility in their governance and operations.