



A NATIONAL DIALOGUE :
**The Secretary of Education's Commission
on the Future of Higher Education**

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Presentation Outline

- Why Create the Commission?
- The Commission's Charge
- The National Dialogue
- What We Heard
- Commission Recommendations
- Next Steps



Why Create the Commission?

- Concerns over our ability to compete globally and signs that the quality of our higher education system is slipping.
- The changing structure and delivery of higher education includes new types of educational institutions and the use of distance learning.
- The demand for increased accountability to government, consumers, and the general public is growing.
- Rising costs and reduced federal and state funding are pressuring higher education institutions to increase affordability and improve the value of and returns on higher education.



The Commission's Charge

- Accessibility, affordability, accountability, and quality of U.S. higher education
 - "The purpose of the Commission is to consider how best to improve our system of higher education to ensure that our graduates are well prepared to meet our future workforce needs and are able to participate fully in the changing economy. To accomplish this purpose, the Commission shall consider Federal, state, local, and institutional roles in higher education and analyze whether the current goals of higher education are appropriate and achievable."



A National Dialogue

- 6 national meetings, 2 public hearings
- Roundtable on accreditation
- 15 Issue Papers
- Input from more than 100 higher education stakeholder organizations and groups
- Thousands of written correspondence
- The commission's final report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, presented to Secretary Spellings in September 2006



Commission Findings

The Commission's final report determined that while America's colleges and universities have much to be proud of, they are not well-prepared for the challenges of an increasingly diverse student population and a competitive global economy.

- College access, particularly for low-income and minority students, is limited by inadequate academic preparation, a lack of information and persistent financial barriers;
- The current financial aid system is confusing, complex and inefficient, and is therefore frequently unable to direct aid to the students who need it most; and
- There is a shortage of clear, comprehensive, and accessible information about the colleges and universities themselves, including comparative data about cost and performance.



Commission Recommendations

- Expand College Access and Success
 - Improve student preparation & persistence
 - Address non-academic barriers
 - Provide significant aid to low-income students



Commission Recommendations

- Restructure the entire student financial aid system
 - Commit to meeting the needs of students from low-income families.
 - Develop at the institutional level innovative means to control costs, improve productivity and increase the supply of higher education.



Commission Recommendations

- Create a robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education.
 - Create a consumer-friendly information database on higher education with useful, reliable information on institutions, coupled with a search engine to enable students, parents, policymakers and others to weight and rank comparative institutional performance.
 - Develop a privacy-protected higher education information system, which collects, analyzes and uses longitudinal progression data on individual students as a vital tool for accountability, policy-making, and consumer choice.
 - Postsecondary education institutions should measure and report meaningful student learning outcomes.



Commission Recommendations

- Embrace a culture of innovation and quality improvement.
 - Develop new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning.



Commission Recommendations

- Develop a national strategy for lifelong learning to keep our citizens and the nation in the forefront of the knowledge revolution.
 - Expand access to adults through the use of technology and innovative delivery models.
 - Create a comprehensive plan to enhance student mobility.



Commission Recommendations

- Achieve global leadership in key strategic areas such as science, engineering, medicine, and other knowledge-intensive professions.
 - Increase federal and state investment in education and research in critical areas.
 - Encourage more research collaboration, multi-disciplinary research and curricula.



The Secretary's Action Plan for Higher Education

- **Accessibility**
 - "There are far too many Americans who want to go to college but cannot—because they're either not prepared or cannot afford it."
- **Affordability**
 - "There is little to no information on why costs are so high and what we're getting in return."
- **Accountability**
 - "No current ranking system of colleges and universities directly measures the most critical point—student performance and learning."



The Secretary's Action Plan for Higher Education

- Strengthen K-12 preparation and align high school standards with college expectations.
- Work with Congress to expand the successful principles of the *No Child Left Behind Act* to high schools.
- Redesign the 12th-grade NAEP test to provide State-level estimates of college and workforce readiness.
- Raise awareness and mobilize leadership to address the issue of adult literacy as a barrier to national competitiveness and individual opportunity.
- Develop a Federal research agenda for adult literacy to identify strategies, models and programs that work.



The Secretary's Action Plan for Higher Education

- Simplify the aid process by using existing income and tax data to help students complete the FAFSA in half the time.
- Notify students of their estimated aid eligibility before spring of their senior year in high school.
- Work with Congress to provide new funds for need-based aid through the Federal financial aid system.
- Commission an independent management consultant review of the Federal financial aid system.
- Revitalize FIPSE to promote innovation and productivity.
- Encourage organizations that report annual college data to develop consistent affordability measures.



The Secretary's Action Plan for Higher Education

- Work with States to build on and link together the 40 existing, privacy-protected higher education information systems.
- Explore incentives for States and institutions that collect and report student learning outcome data.
- Convene members of the accreditation community to recommend changes to the standards for recognition that will place a greater emphasis on results.
- Redesign the Department of Education's college search website to allow consumers to weigh and compare institutions based on their individual interests and needs.