

## Legislature off to fast start; Governor stresses need to preserve educational system while dealing with economic crisis

Long before the ceremonies were over this week, members of the 2009 Washington Legislature were getting down to the hard work that will face them throughout the 105-day regular session.

House and Senate higher education committees quickly held work sessions to hear reports from the Higher Education Coordinating Board on efforts over the past year to develop an implementation strategy for the state's Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education, which was endorsed by the Legislature in 2008.

The House committee session came one day before Gov. Chris Gregoire took the oath of office for her second term. In her inaugural address, the Governor made brief references to higher education, recalling the state's earlier work to build a world-class education system, as well as improving health care and expanding the economy. While we cannot and will not forget those past achievements, "the work today is more basic and urgent," she told lawmakers.

### Focus on basic needs

With the Legislature facing a budget shortfall currently estimated at approximately \$5.7 billion in the next biennium, the Governor said now is the time to "tighten our belts, balance our budget and focus on basic needs—protection of our children, our schools and colleges, our public safety, our environment and our economy."

While much of the Governor's address focused on the immediate crisis facing struggling families and businesses, she also took the opportunity to look toward the future, when the recession will end. To be ready for the new economy that will follow, "we need to preserve our education system to make sure we provide workers skilled in science, math, engineering and technology," the Governor said.

### Carlyle to focus on technology issues

At the Jan. 14 House Higher Education Committee work session, staff members of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) reported on the work they performed on the Washington State Community and Technical College Strategic Technology Plan. The plan's goal is to mobilize technology to increase student success.

As a former board member of the SBCTC, Rep. Reuven Carlyle had chaired the committee that created this plan. Committee Chair, Rep. Deb Wallace, recognized Rep. Carlyle for the work he had done on the technology plan and asked that committee members working on technology issues coordinate with Rep. Carlyle on those issues.

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## Higher ed a focus of several work sessions

On Wednesday, the House Higher Education Committee heard a review of the reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act and its impact in Washington.

"The impact of reauthorization is more meaningful when considered in conjunction with several other pieces of federal legislation that have recently passed," said John Klacik, HECB staff. They include increases to the Pell Grant, student loan modifications, consumer reporting requirements, and tuition "watch lists." Joining Klacik at the presentation was Vi Boyer of the Independent Colleges of Washington.

On Friday, the House committee also considered the impact of cost increases on students. Dr. Bill Zumeta, University of Washington, presented research comparing tuition, appropriations, and financial aid among other states. Klacik also addressed the capacity of various financial aid programs to help mitigate increased costs for students.

## Higher ed committees review SMP implementation efforts

Members of the House and Senate higher education committees this week heard reports on efforts over the past year to create an implementation strategy for the state's Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education.

HECB Executive Director Ann Daley appeared before both legislative committees to describe the work carried out to develop the implementation strategy. She was joined by participants from three work groups established to tackle aspects of the implementation plan.

Rep. Deb Wallace of Vancouver, chair of the House Higher Education Committee, said the committee's work would focus on master plan implementation, "particularly because we own it." She was referring to the Legislature's endorsement of the plan last year.

## Committee sessions (cont.)

During the presentations, several legislators discussed the critical role higher education will play in setting the state's future economic direction.

"Our shoulders feel a little bit heavy because we're talking about the future of Washington state and our ability to have a quality lifestyle," Wallace said.

Daley pointed out that Washington's older generation is the most highly educated in history, and Washington will need to educate and train a younger generation to replace them.

"As this generation retires now, we're not replacing that. I call it a brain drain and that is very alarming," said Rep. Joe Schmick of Colfax.

Rep. Bob Hasegawa of Seattle said he was mindful of the important economic role of higher education will play and said he was optimistic Washington can create "the premier center of academia in the world in the global economy."

## Rebalancing

Former University of Washington President Lee Huntsman, who co-chaired a work group that examined the intersection between higher education and the state economy, discussed one of the major concerns addressed in the Strategic Master Plan—producing sufficient college-educated workers to meet the demands of an increasingly education-intensive economy.

Washington can be proud of the economic "rebalancing" that has occurred over the past two or three decades, Huntsman said. But the kind of new jobs created have often been filled by workers imported from other states or countries.

"While we have a highly educated population from a demographic point of view, we have imported a very high fraction of that educated talent," Huntsman said.

Huntsman said the state needs to be worried about that imbalance. "Probably neither our social welfare nor our economic welfare are sustainable unless we fix it," Huntsman said.

[Read more about Financial Aid](#)

## Next week's schedule:

- **Tuesday Jan. 20:** House Higher Education Committee. Work Session: The Governor's higher education budget and policy changes necessary to implement performance agreements. 10 a.m., House Hearing Room D.
- **Wednesday Jan. 21:** House Higher Education Committee. Work Session: Continued discussion of the Strategic Master Plan implementation. 1:30 p.m., House Hearing Room D.
- **Wednesday Jan. 21:** Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development Committee. Work Session: Community and technical colleges enrollment trends and issues; WTECB presentation on "High Skills-High Wages" report. 3:30 p.m., Senate Hearing Room 3.
- **Wednesday January 21:** House Capital Budget Committee. Community college prioritization process. 3:30 p.m., House Hearing Room C.
- **Friday Jan. 23:** Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development Committee. Work Session: Presentations by four-year institutions on current enrollment trends and issues and how institutions' enrollments may be effected by state fiscal issues. 8 a.m., Senate Hearing Room 3.
- **Friday Jan. 23:** House Higher Education Committee. Work Session: Matching workforce supply and demand in high demand occupations. 8 a.m., House Hearing Room D.

## House higher education bills:

- [HB 1025](#) Requiring disclosure of certain information relating to higher education course materials.
- [HB 1096](#) Enhancing small business participation in state purchasing.
- [HB 1129](#) Establishing a lifelong learning account steering committee.
- [HB 1130](#) Convening a workgroup to develop a single, coordinated student access portal for college information.
- [HB 1156](#) Creating a preference in the alternative route certification program for veterans and National Guard members.
- [HB 1216](#) Adopting a 2009-2011 capital budget.

## House higher ed bills (cont.):

- [HB 1235](#) Making certain current higher education tuition-setting practices permanent.
- [HB 1243](#) Making 2009 supplemental operating appropriations.
- [HB 1244](#) Making 2009-2011 operating appropriations.

## Senate higher education bills:

- [SB 5001](#) - Eliminating the matching fund requirement for the American Indian endowed scholarship program.
- [SB 5007](#) Allowing public technical colleges to offer associate transfer degrees.
- [SB 5043](#) - Convening a work group to develop a single, coordinated student access portal for college information.
- [SB 5044](#) Changing work study provisions
- [SB 5048](#) Providing for coordination of workforce and economic development.
- [SB 5077](#) Creating the historically Black college fund pilot project.
- [SB 5078](#) Authorizing the University of Washington to set business fees.
- [SB 5088](#) Regarding salaries for adjunct faculty.
- [SB 5089](#) Requiring an ethical audit of the personnel management systems at community and technical colleges.
- [SB 5106](#) Creating an independent four-year polytechnical college and an investment district to finance it.
- [SB 5173](#) Authorizing the regional universities to confer honorary doctorate degrees.
- [SB 5174](#) Providing an incentive to improve the on-time graduation rates at institutions of higher education.
- [SB 5175](#) Changing the Washington college promise scholarship program.
- [SB 5176](#) Creating a bi-state partnership for teachers of children with visual impairments.
- [SB 5177](#) Creating a global Asia institute within the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies.
- [SB 5188](#) Requiring school districts to provide remedial postsecondary education or to pay for the cost.