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Key Facts report offers many insights on state's higher education system

OLYMPIA – The 2012 edition of “Key Facts about Higher Education in Washington” provides data and discussion on a wide range of important topics related to higher education in the state.

The report, produced annually by the HECB, is a convenient resource for basic information such as student enrollments, demographics and tuition rates. However, it also offers more complex analyses, including insights on how the national recession and its impacts on the state budget have fundamentally altered Washington’s higher education funding structure, and how higher education benefits Washington’s population and economy.

The report includes chapters outlining the significant higher education challenges Washington faces today, as well as sections on how Washington compares with other states on key higher education measures, and on the progress the state has made in some areas.

A concluding chapter discusses proposed “next steps” for achieving continued progress on the higher education goals contained in the state’s Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education. The seven next steps were developed and approved by the HECB as part of a master plan update last year.

An online version is available on the HECB website at www.hecb.wa.gov/KeyFacts2012.

Among the many facts included the report:

- Students now pay a majority of the per-student cost of higher education at all of Washington’s public baccalaureate institutions. Until the 2009-11 biennium, state appropriations accounted for a majority of per-student funding at the institutions.
- Approximately 690,000 Washington residents aged 18-44 reported having “some college but no degree” in 2010, and 65 percent of them were not currently enrolled in college. This suggests the state has a large pool of residents who are already on the way to earning degrees but have suspended their efforts for various reasons.
- About 36 percent of the 63,386 high school graduates in Washington in 2009 had not enrolled in college within one year after graduation.
- Although the main campuses of public baccalaureate institutions still account for most of the baccalaureate degrees produced in the state, branch campuses have grown the fastest—increasing degree production by 121 percent between 2000-01 and 2009-10.
- Washington’s production of high demand degrees in fields such as health sciences, computer science and engineering has increased by 42 percent since 2002. A study shows that nationally, Washington remains near the top among states in which jobs will require college degrees through 2018.

Key Facts also contains information on student financial aid programs, but a more detailed look at that issue is available in another recent HECB report: “Access Affordability, Achievement: Annual Report on State Financial Aid Programs,” which is available on the HECB website at www.hecb.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SFAAnnualReport2012.pdf.

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