

January 2011

Executive Summary

Discussion Draft

Fitting Together Policy Environment, Educational System Designs, and Leadership: What's Best for Washington?

Governor Gregoire's proposed Department of Education is a bold reform intended to consolidate all of education under one tent to make it more cohesive and efficient. The Governor has declared that Washington does not have a system of education, but rather a collection of agencies that focus on parts of the system, but not the whole. She would reform education so that it is consolidated into one cabinet-level department that reports to the Governor. She also has stated that this is not a cost-driven reform, but rather a priority-driven reform.

Washington's educational system is interdependent and does indeed need to focus on improving the seams between K-12 and higher education. Last year, as SSB 6355, the Legislature endorsed the HECB's System Design Plan, which provided targeted strategies and activities to better prepare Washington's young people for college, to entice more adults back to college to complete their degrees, to graduate more residents to higher levels of degrees, and to encourage more students to earn degrees in high demand fields.

Is consolidating all of education governance the best way to go about these improvements? Here are issues that everyone needs to consider in a discussion of whether a centralized Department of Education is a good fit for Washington's educational needs:

- Will a consolidated Department of Education be able to do a better job in raising the state's educational attainment levels than the current structure?
- How will a P-20 Advisory Council function in relation to a cabinet-level Department of Education?
- As a much larger segment of education, will K-12 issues dominate all other levels of education?
- How will students be affected?
- Will promising and effective practices that are currently in effect, like the community and technical colleges' nationally-acclaimed Student Achievement Initiative, continue to be supported?
- Will policies and practices in effect today continue to be supported if a new Governor and new legislators are elected in a few years? How will the new Department of Education keep politics out of education?

- What is the cost and/or savings of the proposed consolidated Department of Education reform?
- Will K-12 and higher education board members and staff truly spend more time working together on P-16 issues under the new Department of Education than they currently do?
- K-12 and higher education state and institutional boards, faculty and administrators now work together on many initiatives. How exactly will the new Department of Education do a better job than the current system in addressing such cross-cutting education issues as teacher preparation or reduction of postsecondary remediation?
- Who will control the budget in the proposed model?
- U.S. elementary and secondary students do not perform as well as their counterparts in other countries. The world still considers the US higher education system, although not perfect, as the best. Will merging these two systems negatively affect higher education?

Recent efforts in other states to establish one governance structure for all education sectors have not produced clearly successful results. States with longer histories of combined governance – Idaho, Pennsylvania and New York – also are not doing particularly well on P-16 issues when compared with states like Georgia and Maryland, which have not merged K-12 and higher education systems together.

Pennsylvania has some of the nation's highest tuition rates. Idaho's student information systems are among the most under-developed in the nation. Florida's newly consolidated system has fostered unnecessary and expensive duplication of programs and services. Can we organize a consolidated governance system in Washington's that is significantly better than all those that already exist?

The key P-16 issues of aligning curricula, developing college preparation and graduation standards for students, and educating qualified teachers do not necessarily require a centralized governance system. They *do* require real attention and strong leadership. Although P-16 issues should be part of the job description of every education leader in Washington, the issues around student preparation and transition represent only a part of the full challenge of governance.

Before we embark on a reform that will tax the talents and resources of the education leaders of the state and impact every student in every classroom, we need to know whether the consequences of the reform are the ones we think we are going to get.

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Fitting Together Policy Environment, Educational System Designs, and Leadership: What's Best for Washington?

In the 15 years between 1985 and 2000, there were more than 100 proposals to reform higher education governance (McLendon¹) and there probably have been at least that many proposals since then. Finding the perfect governance model for Washington or any other state is a challenge precisely because there is no *best* model. States whose models vary – like Maryland, Georgia, Indiana, and Louisiana – all have been making good progress addressing issues like access to college, reducing postsecondary remediation, and improving teacher education.

Education governance works best when it safeguards both the public interest and the education community's interest:

*... at the heart of the process lie continued efforts to strike a balance between the state's need for planning, oversight, and incentives on behalf of the greater social good, and institutions' interests in their maximizing their own freedom and autonomy.*²

For the most part, education governance works on an “incremental” model. There are long, fairly stable periods in which system professionals work with the legislative and executive branches to improve educational opportunity and meet state needs. But occasionally dramatic shifts occur. When stable periods are followed by radical change, the result is called “punctuated equilibrium.”³

Governor Gregoire's proposed Department of Education is a big shift from the current educational governance structure, (see Appendix B.) Is a Department of Education, with one Secretary responsible for all of education who reports directly to the Governor, a good fit for Washington?

To answer that question, we first need to ask a few more questions.

- What are the pros and cons of putting all of education under one roof?
- Are there lessons we can learn from other states?
- What model would provide the best opportunity for students at all levels of education?

¹ McLendon, M.K... (2000). State governance reform of higher education: Patterns, trends, and theories of the public policy process. In J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 18). New York: Agathon.

² Novak & Leslie. (2000). A not so distant mirror: Great Depression writings on the governance and finance of public higher education. *History of Higher Education Annual*, 20 (59-78).

³ True, J., Jones, B., & Baumgartner, F. (1999). Punctuated-equilibrium theory: Explaining stability and change in American policymaking. In P. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (pp. 97–116). Boulder, CO: Westview.

- How can governance build upon the existing educational system and move it forward—without a huge new investment of dollars and with the least disruption to students and employers?

This discussion paper will first explore the pros and cons of consolidated education governance structures. We'll also look at what several other states are doing:

- Three that have had Departments of Education for a very long time (New York, Pennsylvania, and Idaho).
- Two that have tried “super-boards” with limited success (Florida and Minnesota).
- Two others that have made progress improving education at all levels without super-board structures (Georgia and Maryland).

Finally, we'll review what we've discussed concerning governance types and what has worked in other states with an eye toward the best fit for Washington.

Pros and Cons of a Centralized Department of Education

The argument for such a system

A centralized Department of Education offers the potential for:

- Greater efficiency.
- Seamlessness between the “silos” of early learning, K-12, and higher education.
- More coherent delivery of education.
- Faster implementation of good policy and practice.
- Greater alignment of curriculum, standards, and teacher education.
- Greater responsiveness to external stakeholders.

K-12 and higher education are interdependent and need to work well together in a world in which global competition for educated citizens and knowledge workers has increased. The Obama administration has made raising the level of educational attainment a national priority.

Many states have adopted strategic plans or initiatives that echo the central objective of Washington's Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education: *produce thousands of additional degrees and certificates annually*. Increasingly, we are aware we will have to find ways to meet these challenges without additional money—and possibly with even *less* money.

Both K-12 and postsecondary education have their own sets of challenges. K-12 needs to balance standards and accountability with the flexibility and creativity necessary to prepare all students, no matter their learning styles and backgrounds, for higher levels of achievement. Higher education has more flexibility and choice than K-12 in its core functions of teaching and research, and has traditions that work against common measures of attainment and accountability, but it shares the goal and the challenge of ensuring students move successfully through each phase of their educational experience to completion.

The fact is that K-12 and higher education need each other and will not be successful unless they work together to develop college-ready students and classroom-ready teachers. Every high school needs to know how well its students are doing in college and the workplace. Every college and university needs to track its graduates into the world of work—especially those graduates who teach in the K-12 schools. Teachers at all levels need to create more effective feedback loops that align curricula and expectations across educational levels.

The fact that K-12 and higher education are interdependent, share many challenges, and are seeking to improve without compromising excellence tends to strengthen the argument for placing them under a centralized system or board. But, does form follow function?

The argument against such a system

The “con” arguments center on issues that arise because K-12 and higher education have vastly different cultures.⁴ A P-16 workshop conducted by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) in 2007, addressed the cultural differences between K-12 and higher education. SHEEO’s president, Paul Lingenfelter, contended that while both cultures must change and converge toward each other, they cannot become one, homogenized culture.

K-12 is focused fundamentally on providing basic, universal education, Lingenfelter noted. Its core values are providing equity of opportunity and achieving a universal level of attainment to minimum standards needed to ensure an educated citizenry in a democratic society. The goal of universal K-12 education is to provide literacy, civic education, and the basic skills necessary for a productive life for all people.

The state exerts considerable control over U.S. schools, even with our tradition of “local” control. State laws regulate the length of the school year, curricular standards, assessments, and sometimes even textbooks. Hundreds of state educational professionals typically work to ensure state laws concerning K-12 are implemented and followed.

In contrast, higher education has traditionally been more selective and competitive. Its core values include teaching, research, and scholarship, with many colleges and universities devoting as much attention and resources to the function of knowledge-building as to teaching the next generation of scholars. Autonomy and academic freedom are core values and very strong forces in the pursuit of new knowledge and the development of new scholars.

The control of the state over higher education is quite different from that for K-12. Most state statutes governing higher education address general matters, in contrast to the detailed regulations and laws governing the K-12 schools. Higher education has fewer state laws to govern and monitor it. Staffs of higher education state agencies are typically small compared to the K-12 agency staff.

⁴ P. Lingenfelter. (October 29, 2007). “K-12 and Higher Education: Cultural Differences and Bridge Building.” Moving beyond the Culture Divide: The Shared Imperative of P-16 Vision and Action. SHEEO P-16 Workshop. Boulder: SHEEO.

K-12 and higher education also differ significantly in the way they are financed and managed. The coordination and financial management of 295 local school districts with more than 2,300 schools and similar missions is very different from the coordination and financial management of six public baccalaureate institutions and 34 community and technical colleges with very different missions, student bodies, research foci, and outreach programs.

In addition, there is a profound perceptual difference in how well the two sectors—K-12 and higher education—are performing. In the United States, K-12 students and schools have consistently performed at lower levels than their counterparts in other countries⁵. But U.S. colleges and universities, while not perfect, are considered the world's best.

Countries like Scotland, China, and Malaysia have emulated our community colleges. Students from other countries will describe their top higher education institution as being “The Harvard of my country.” If the K-12 and higher education systems are merged under one governance structure, it is almost certain that the management culture of the larger of the two systems—that of K-12—will dominate.

So the question becomes, is it not only possible, but also desirable, to merge the cultures of K-12 and higher education under one governance structure? This is a question of whether function will follow form, a question that was addressed by the Executive Director of the State Higher Education Executive Officers at a national P-16 workshop:

... a “seamless” educational system dominated by the existing culture either of K-12 or of higher education in America is unlikely to give us the results we need. And the two “cultures” are probably the most intractable aspects of American education. Even if it were feasible, homogenizing the cultures of K-12 and higher education doesn't seem like a good idea. But we do need to work together much more effectively, and both cultures will need to change in order to meet the challenges of more widespread educational attainment.⁶

To examine whether a centralized department of education is the best way to achieve greater efficiency, coherence, and responsiveness between K-12 and higher education, it is helpful to look at the results being achieved by three states that have had P-16 structures for a long time: Idaho, Pennsylvania, and New York. Two other states: Florida and Minnesota, which have attempted this governance model in the last two decades will be examined as well.

Appendix A provides background information on how the three types of higher education governance structures (consolidated governing boards, coordinating boards, and planning agencies) are constituted and how system designs (how layered or unified a state's higher education system is) are articulated.

⁵ For international comparisons of U.S. students' performance on math and science with students from 60 other countries and on reading literacy with 40 other countries, see http://timss.bc.edu/TIMSS2007/PDF/T07_M_IR_Chapter1.pdf (math) and http://timss.bc.edu/TIMSS2007/PDF/T07_S_IR_Chapter1.pdf (science) and http://timss.bc.edu/PDF/P06_IR_Ch1.pdf (reading).

⁶ P. Lingenfelter. Address delivered at the October 29, 2007 SHEEO P-16 Workshop, Boulder, Colorado.

States with a Single Department of Education Structure: Idaho and Pennsylvania

Would a more centralized governance model for education be a good fit for Washington? Examining how well this model is working in three other states can shed some light on this question. Idaho, New York, and Pennsylvania have had a single Department of Education with legal authority for all education for many years. New York actually has two unified boards—one for New York City and another for the rest of the state.

In theory, a single state-level department of education would encourage policymakers and professional education staff to better address the “seams” in the system where students often fall through the cracks—the transition points between early learning and K-12, between high school and college, between community colleges and universities. In practice, however, a single Department of Education tends to focus far more staff and resources on the K-12 sector. In these structures, higher education often runs on “auto pilot.” This latter outcome is the case in both Idaho and Pennsylvania.

A review of how Pennsylvania is performing in education can provide some insight into how well its governance structure is working. In the 2008 Measuring Up report, Pennsylvania did not receive good grades: a “B-” in preparing high school students for college, a “C-” in student participation in college and an “F” grade in affordability.⁷ There are also large gaps in college preparation by ethnicity in Pennsylvania. The report concludes that “college opportunities for Pennsylvania residents are only fair” and that “a very low percentage of working-age adults (4 in 100) are enrolled in higher education.”

Pennsylvania charges among the highest tuition rates in the nation. Students from poor and working class families frequently have to devote as much as 61 percent of their income, even after aid, to pay the cost of earning a degree at a public, four-year institution. Education leaders report that while the state’s former teacher colleges (“normal schools”) have tended to focus more on P-16 issues, the “state-related” universities essentially go their own way. As a result, Pennsylvania has not been able to significantly improve degree production or other accountability measures.

Idaho’s grades in the 2008 Measuring Up report are similar to Pennsylvania’s: a “C” in preparation for college, a “D” in participation in college; and an “F” in affordability. The report concludes that college opportunities for young people and working adults are poor, and that “Idaho’s fairly low performance in educating its young population could limit the state’s access to a competitive workforce and weaken its economy.” Although the state has somewhat improved its preparation of K-12 students for college in recent years, the transition between high school and college continues to be a problem, with low overall participation in college and higher education becoming even less affordable.

Both Idaho and Pennsylvania have not made progress on the transition between high school and college, according to data in the latest Measuring Up report. Both states have actually declined in making college affordable and getting students enrolled in college.

⁷Measuring Up Report. (2008). The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Sacramento, CA. Retrieved January 21, 2011 from http://measuringup2008.highereducation.org/print/state_reports/short/PA.pdf

States with an Education “Super-Board” Model: Minnesota and Florida

Two states, Florida and Minnesota, have what is commonly called a “Super-Board” governance structure for education, quite similar to Governor Gregoire’s proposed Department of Education.

In 2001, Florida Governor Jeb Bush won approval from the legislature to establish a “super-board” that included all education sectors. The Board was led by a Commissioner of Education who reported to the Governor.

In 2002, however, Florida voters passed a constitutional amendment that removed the four-year institutions from the control of the board. The community colleges stayed under the education super-board, separate from the four-year sector. In Minnesota, much the same occurred after the state established a super-board in the early 1990s. The University of Minnesota system was able to remain separate from the Department of Education.

Minnesota Governance

In 1991, the Minnesota Legislature merged its community and technical colleges and the state universities into one system of 32 institutions under a law that went into effect July 1, 1995. Replacing the three separate governing boards and three chancellors, the law created one board and one chancellor for the entire system—except for the University of Minnesota. The University of Minnesota is identified in the state’s constitution, enabling it to remain outside the umbrella of the state board’s control. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is headed by a 15-member Board of Trustees who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Minnesota also has an Office of Higher Education, a cabinet-level state agency providing financial aid programs, student information, and research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends. The Office of Higher Education reports to the Board and is supposed to play a statewide coordinating role, but it has little real power. (See Appendix D for a chart of Minnesota’s higher education governance structure.)

A key transition point influencing student progress and success occurs between two- and four-year postsecondary institutions. When the research university system is outside the umbrella of the rest of education, student transfer between community colleges and the research universities must be accomplished through voluntary agreements, often developed individually by each institution involved.

Minnesota has traditionally done well in preparing its students for college, even before the governance structure changed in the 1990s. It has been one of the top-performing states on students’ scores on college entrance exams for some time, although gaps exist by ethnicity. The state performs well in the proportion of high school students who enroll directly in college. However, the state has only a low percentage of working-age adults in college and scores poorly on affordability.⁸ It does not appear, therefore, that enough focus is being placed on increasing the number of students who enroll in college, especially non-traditional students.

⁸ *Measuring Up*. Retrieved January 21, 2011 from http://measuringup2008.highereducation.org/states/report_cards/index.php?state=MN

Florida Governance

Education governance in been Florida has undergone a number of interesting transitions. In 2001, then-Governor Jeb Bush promoted a plan to re-organize the state's education agencies into one "super-board" structure⁹ with a Commissioner appointed by the governor. A Transition Task Force was assigned to implement the change by July 2003. However, a grass-roots political initiative sparked by former Florida Gov. Bob Graham resulted in the state's universities being pulled from under the governance tent. (See Appendix C, Florida governance before and after re-organization.)

The public emotion that accompanied the Florida education reorganization is captured in a newspaper article that appeared on Christmas Eve 2001 by former Graham, announcing his voter initiative:

Ten years ago, we ranked 21st in the nation on K-12 per-pupil expenditures; we now rank 42nd . . . This amendment [to the Florida Constitution] will help reverse the slide of our education system by reaffirming that the state board of education is to focus on K-12 . . .

A central body that can serve as an overall coordinator of our state university system, the board of governors would also be established under the constitutional amendment. This board would assist with easing the transition to universities for high school and community college students, as well as avoiding the duplication of costly medical schools, law schools and new universities that have proliferated since the political desires of the Legislature have taken over the governing of the higher education system.

Each of these boards would be constitutionally protected from the political meddling that have distorted the current system.¹⁰

Florida is still struggling to understand what the 2001 re-organization means. Two governors have occupied the Tallahassee Governor's mansion since Jeb Bush's term of office ended. Governor Rick Scott, who won the Florida gubernatorial election in November 2010, has already appointed a Transition Team to study education and make recommendations for additional improvements. Although a 17-member Board of Governors (14 appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate) governs the state's public four-year universities, the two major research institutions are still seeking tuition autonomy.

Over the last seven years, Florida's ability to coordinate higher education in a strategic and purposeful manner has deteriorated. The four-year institutions are separate with their own Board of Regents due to the Graham initiative. The rest of education is under the super board. Unfortunately, placing the universities under their own board has not solved the problems Graham cited when he sparked the initiative to hold them separate. A costly and unnecessary third university medical school has been built; the system has been unable to stem unnecessary duplication of degree programs; and many community colleges have transformed themselves into four-year state colleges (although some have not).

⁹ Education Governance Reorganization Task Force. (March 1, 2001). Final Report. Recommendations to the Florida Legislature. Tallahassee, Florida.

¹⁰ Bob Graham. (December 24, 2001). Universities need board of governors. *Sun-Sentinel*. Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

Currently, the university system's Florida Board of Governors is trying to get a handle on capacity and demand issues, including which institutions should offer baccalaureate degrees. One possible action might be to call a one-year moratorium on *all* baccalaureate degree programs to get a handle on the economic justification for additional degrees and to systematically look at capacity.¹¹

In short, system planning in Florida has suffered. For at least one state that recently tried it, a super-board is not a panacea. It is true that Florida is a leading state in terms of degree productivity: the state's institutions produce many degrees at low per-degree cost. But the state already did that *before* consolidation. Florida developed its vaunted 2+2 articulation system back in the 1970's, when it also developed its Common Course Numbering System. The state has been one of the top-performing states regarding student transfer for decades. Therefore, Florida's education re-organization cannot claim success in promoting better student transitions between the educational seams. What it may have done is cause more problems than it solved.

States that Are Making Progress on Improving Education at All Levels: Maryland and Georgia

On the other hand, some states have been making progress improving education at all levels without consolidating educational governance under a Department of Education or super-board structure. These states have strong P-16 systems and strong leaders. Georgia and Maryland have effective systems, and several other states, including Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Indiana have made significant progress on issues that address the "seams" of education.

Georgia

Georgia has one of the least complex systems of higher education governance, a unified system with constitutional autonomy. The University System of Georgia's Board of Regents, created in 1931 and granted constitutional autonomy in 1941 when the governor tried to interfere in the hiring and firing of university administrators, is the state's unified governing authority. The governor appoints and the Senate confirms board members to seven-year terms.

The Georgia system of higher education includes 35 institutions (four research universities, two regional universities, 13 state universities, seven state colleges, and nine community colleges).¹² Georgia also has a separate State Board of Technical and Adult Education, which oversees technical colleges, economic development, and adult literacy education.

Because the Georgia system is autonomous, priorities for improvement often arise from within the system itself. But the Governor and elected leaders also set priorities, such as the popular HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) scholarship that was established in 1993 with state lottery funds. A strength of the Georgia system is the ability of elected leaders and higher education to work collaboratively to achieve state goals.

¹¹ P. Lingnenfelter, personal communication, January 20, 2011.

¹² Education Commission of the States.

P-16 initiatives have been strongly supported by former governors and by the University of Georgia system chancellors. The statewide P-16 council, appointed by the Governor, has paid close attention to improving teacher education and improving preparation for at-risk students. As part of the P-16 initiative, Georgia raised its college admissions standards, and transfer is not a huge concern because all the institutions under the University System of Georgia share a core curriculum.

Georgia's higher education governance system has prompted improvement in student access and success in college in large part because executive leadership—both public and professional—have been able to work well together to focus on state priorities. The state is an example of how leadership needs to be factored into any discussion of governance structure and design.

Maryland

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), a 12-member coordinating board created in 1988 to serve as the coordinating body for Maryland's postsecondary education system, includes the following six segments: University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, St. Mary's College of Maryland, Community Colleges, Independent Colleges and Universities, and Private Career Schools.

One of the state's important accomplishments has been improving the transition between high school and college. Maryland was one of the first states to establish a P-16 (now P-20) Council.

Its accomplishments include:

- Improvements in teacher recruitment and retention.
- The alignment of high school exit and college entry curricula.
- Strengthening of high school English and math preparation for students.
- The development of an Associate of Arts in Teaching to provide a clear teacher education pathway to address the teacher shortage.
- Reduction of postsecondary remediation.
- Improvement in data collection that informs P-16 efforts to improve teacher education and student preparation for college.

The state has made sure that cross-cutting efforts to improve education are highly visible. Maryland's Governor heads a P-20 Leadership Council that includes the Superintendent of the State Department of Education (K-12), the Secretary of the Department of Business and Economic Development, the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland, the Secretary of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the Secretary of the Department of Labor.

Maryland has a coordinating board structure, while Georgia has a very unified governing board structure. But both have made substantial improvements across the seams of education in student preparation for college.

What Washington Can Learn from Other States

In difficult economic times such as we are experiencing, questions concerning the appropriate governance structure for education often arise. The poor economy is the strongest national force at work right now pushing states to consider more centralized models of governance—models it is thought might be able to help institutions change course more quickly by reducing the “contact points” in the system. Is a shift toward a centralized educational governance model a good fit for Washington—not only during the immediate economic downturn, but also for the years after the economy turns around?

Governor Gregoire’s proposed Department of Education is a bold reform intended to consolidate all of education under one tent to make education more cohesive and efficient. The Governor has declared that Washington does not have a system of education, but rather a collection of agencies that focus on parts of the system, but not the whole. She would reform education so that it is consolidated into one cabinet-level department that reports to the Governor. She also has stated that this is not a cost-driven reform but rather a priority-driven reform.

Washington’s educational system is indeed composed of different, semi-autonomous but interdependent parts. And all parts of this system need to focus on improving the seams between K-12 and higher education. Last year, as SSB 6355, the Legislature endorsed the Higher Education Coordinating Board’s System Design Plan, which provided targeted strategies and activities to better prepare Washington’s young people for college, to entice more adults back to college to complete their degrees, to graduate more residents to higher levels of degrees, and to encourage more students to earn degrees in high-demand fields.

Each of the states reviewed in this discussion paper – Idaho, Pennsylvania, Florida, Minnesota, Georgia, and Maryland – provide useful information concerning the type of education governance that best fits Washington. What we learned from the review of states that have one central department for all of education is that none of them is noted for strong postsecondary planning or coherence or for excellent P-16 systems. Other states have done better in these areas.

And what we learn from Florida and Minnesota is that attempts at centralization that exclude the flagship universities, in Minnesota’s case, or all of the public universities, in Florida’s case, face challenges regarding key planning and coordinating functions, such as reducing unnecessary duplication of programs and facilitating successful articulation and transfer.

The questions below are prompted by a review of the governance structures and performance of the six states reviewed in this paper. Here are questions we need to ask in considering whether a centralized Department of Education is a good fit for Washington’s educational needs:

- Will a consolidated Department of Education be able to do a better job in raising the state’s educational attainment levels than the current structure?
- How will a P-20 Advisory Council function in relation to a cabinet-level Department of Education?
- As a much larger segment of education, will K-12 issues dominate all other levels of education?
- How will students be affected?

- Will promising and effective practices that are currently in effect, like the community and technical colleges' nationally-acclaimed Student Achievement Initiative, continue to be supported?
- Will policies and practices in effect today continue to be supported if a new Governor and new legislators are elected in a few years? How will the new Department of Education keep politics out of education?
- What is the cost and/or savings of the proposed consolidated Department of Education reform?
- Will K-12 and higher education board members and staff spend more time working together under the new Department of Education than they currently do?
- K-12 and higher education state and institutional boards, faculty and administrators already work together on many initiatives. How exactly will the new Department of Education do a better job than the current system in such cross-cutting education issues as teacher preparation or reduction of postsecondary remediation?
- Who will control the budget in the model?
- U.S. elementary and secondary students do not perform as well as their counterparts in other countries. The world still considers the U.S. higher education system, although not perfect, as the best. Will merging these two systems negatively affect higher education?

The three states with the longest history of a consolidated state educational department (Idaho, Pennsylvania, and New York) are not noted for strong postsecondary planning or coherence and have not done a particularly effective job on P-16 issues, compared to states such as Georgia and Maryland—states that do not have a consolidated system.

Pennsylvania has some of the highest tuition rates and Idaho's student information systems are among the most under-developed in the U.S. Florida's newly consolidated system has fostered wasteful and unnecessary and expensive duplication of programs and services. How will Washington's consolidated system be better than those that already exist?

The key P-16 issues of aligning curricula, developing college preparation and graduation standards for students, and educating qualified teachers do not necessarily require a centralized governance system. They *do* require real attention and strong leadership. P-16 issues should be part of the job description of every education leader in Washington, but it cannot be the entire job. Before we embark on a reform that will tax the talents and resources of the education leaders of the state and impact every student in every classroom, we need to know whether the consequences of the reform are the ones we think we are going to get.

Appendix A

Higher Education Governance Structures and Designs

Types of Higher Education Governing Boards

In higher education governance, we talk about three kinds of boards: consolidated governing boards, coordinating boards, and planning agencies. In 2002, the most recent year in which researchers classified boards according to type, 22 states had consolidated higher education governing boards, 25 had coordinating boards, and three states had planning agencies.¹³ Some states, like Washington, have more than one type of board, with a governing board for the community and technical colleges but a coordinating board for all of higher education—or some other configuration.

Governing Boards

Consolidated governing boards have the strongest authority. They can issue mandates and make changes in higher education more quickly than other types of boards. They do not necessarily need to build consensus to get things done. These types of boards were more frequently found in states that were smaller, more rural, and more sparsely populated. With fewer educational institutions to deal with and less complexity in general, a unified approach toward education issues wasn't difficult to achieve.

Coordinating Boards

The second major types of higher education boards are coordinating boards. They coordinate policy and planning functions across sectors of higher education (two- and four-year, public and private). They typically must build consensus to get things done, which is both a strength and a weakness. It takes them longer to get things done but they typically end up with more “buy-in” to the policies and plans they adopt. Historically, states that were larger, more populated, more urban, and had more colleges and universities tended to create coordinating boards. The greater complexity of the educational system in these states called for a governance structure that promoted dialogue and negotiation.

Planning Agencies

There are also three planning agency states which can suggest policies and plans, raise awareness about educational issues, and invite various educational stakeholders to engage in discussion and make recommendations. But they have little real authority regarding program approval, budgeting authority, or other regulatory and advisory functions and must rely on persuasion to address educational issues.

Of the 22 *governing* board states, nine put all of higher education under one board, and 14 have two separate boards (typically one for the community colleges, which could be either governing or coordinating, and another one for the four-year institutions). Of the 25 *coordinating* board states, most also have some kind of regulatory authority, 21 have authority to approve academic programs, and 16 have strong budgetary authority.

¹³ McGuinness, A.C. (2002). *The Authority of State Boards of Postsecondary Education*. Education Commission of the States. Retrieved January 21, 2011 from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/42/87/4287.pdf>

Centralized Departments for K-12 and Higher Education

Classifying states according to how they govern higher education is only one way to look at education governance. Another way is to ask whether K-12 is included under the same umbrella as higher education. Three states follow that model with legal authority for all of education, Pre- or K-12 through postsecondary education—New York, Pennsylvania, and Idaho. In Idaho and New York, the State Board of Education has responsibility for all of education, with New York having two such statewide boards—one for New York City (CUNY) and one for the rest of the state (SUNY).

Educational System Designs

Another important concept in education governance is the system *design*, that is, how unified or layered the state's education system is. Richardson, Bracco, Callan and Finney (1999)¹⁴ describe three such types: **segmented**, **unified**, and **federal** designs. In a segmented system like Michigan, for example, there may be multiple institutional governing boards but no state or system agency with over-arching responsibilities.

This is not a particularly effective model for addressing cross-sector issues in systems that are multi-layered and complex. Unified systems, like Georgia's, are ones in which there is a single governing board for the whole system. In unified systems, there is considerable interdependence and the board "speaks with one voice" representing all of higher education—both two- and four-year institutions.

Federal systems are layered systems, with some separation of powers. For example, there may be a governing board for the community colleges, and a governing board for one or more groups of four-year institutions (such as the regional-comprehensives). All of these middle-layer boards would then report to an overall coordinating board that has broad system responsibilities for planning and accountability. Illinois used to have such a board for many decades.

State Policy Roles

A critical piece of the governance puzzle concerns the kind of policy role that the state wants to play. Richardson et al (1999)¹⁵ describe four typical roles: providing resources, regulating, consumer advocacy, and steering (pp. 14-16). With today's emphasis on productivity and accountability, few states are willing to simply adopt the first role – providing resources and letting institutions go their merry way. This is certainly true in Washington.

Global competition and market forces hugely influence higher education in Washington, a major Pac Rim state. The state's well-being depends upon those who have the education and skills to contribute to the state's economic growth and innovation, productivity and creativity. And both the legislative and the executive branches have been clear in the need for higher education to account for the resources that it receives.

¹⁴ Richardson, R.C., Bracco, K.R., Callan, P.M., & Finney, J.E. (1999). *Designing State Higher Education Systems for a New Century*. Phoenix: American Council on Education and Oryx Press.

¹⁵ Richardson et al. (1999).

A state that emphasizes the regulating role often acts more like a “referee,” controlling the relationship between institutions and “the market” (students, parents, even employers if they pay for classes). A state adopting the third type of role – consumer advocacy – tends to weigh in on the side of students (the consumers) to ensure adequate financial aid is available. This, in turn, allows students to strengthen institutions by the dollars they bring with them.

The fourth state policy role, steering, is one few states have played – but it is one that has gathered much interest lately. It involves “steering” all of higher education, public and private, two- and four-year, toward outcomes that align with state or governmental priorities. Steering can be accomplished by strategies such as greater use of private institutions (including online institutions such as Western Governors University) and differential tuition and funding to encourage students to take advantage of under-used sectors.

Steering involves crafting policies, including financial aid policies, to encourage the “market” (e.g. students) to pursue college. With steering, price fluctuates with demand. If the state is focusing on consumer advocacy, however, its role is to support student demand. And in a regulating role, the state controls the price.

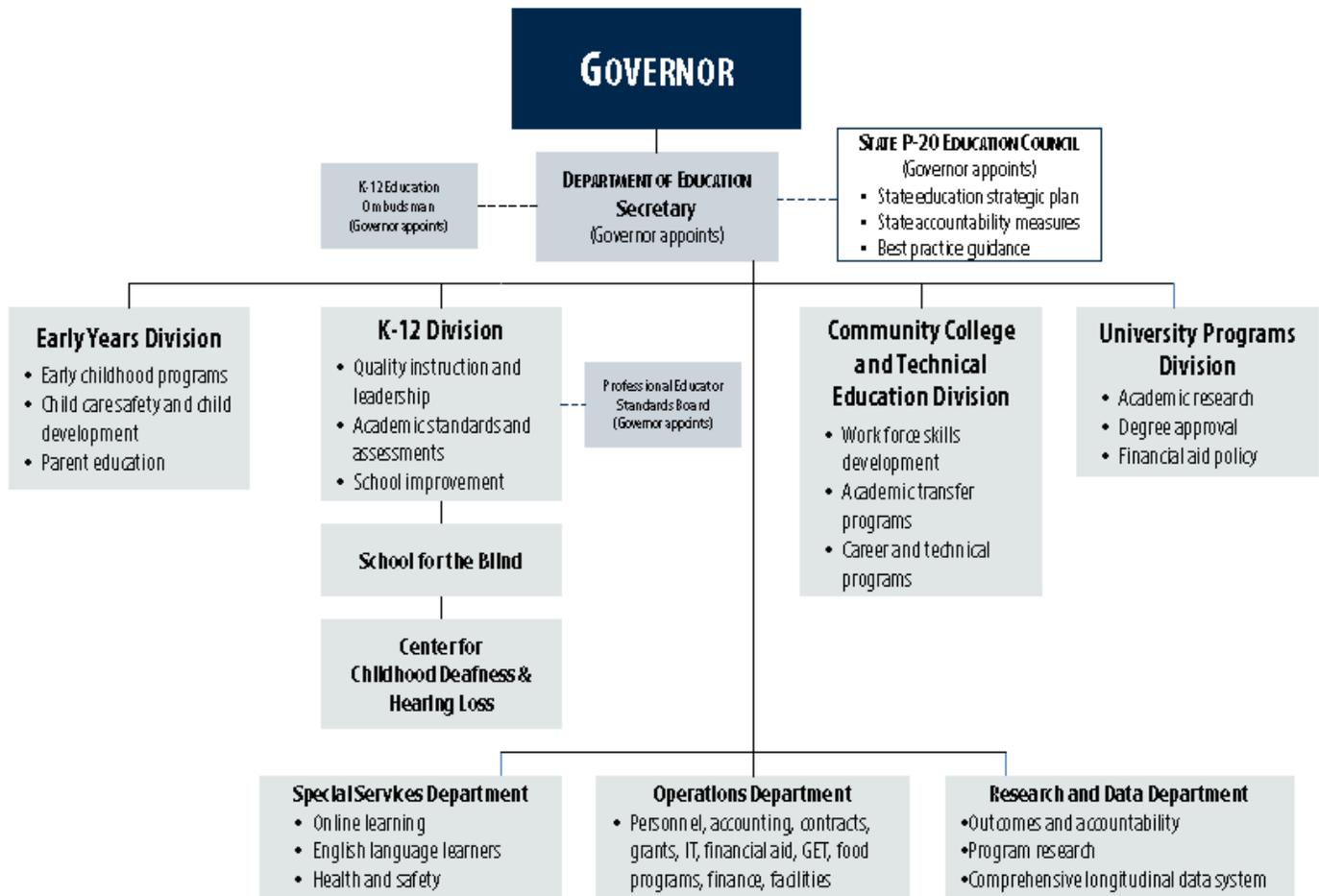
In Washington, higher education governance has arguably leaned toward both regulatory and consumer advocacy roles more than it has toward provider or steering roles. The Legislature has capped tuition (regulatory) while also providing some of the highest levels of state financial aid assistance in the country (consumer advocacy).

In deciding whether to switch governance structures, it's critical to ask which role(s) are most important to Washingtonians *now and in the future*. Should the state serve as higher education's promoter? Should it be a referee between students and institutions or a student advocate? And if Washington shifts its state policy role(s), will the shift be sustainable? If it isn't, we run the risk of creating an insecure planning environment – especially for students, parents and employers.

Appendix B

Governor Gregoire's Proposed Washington Department of Education

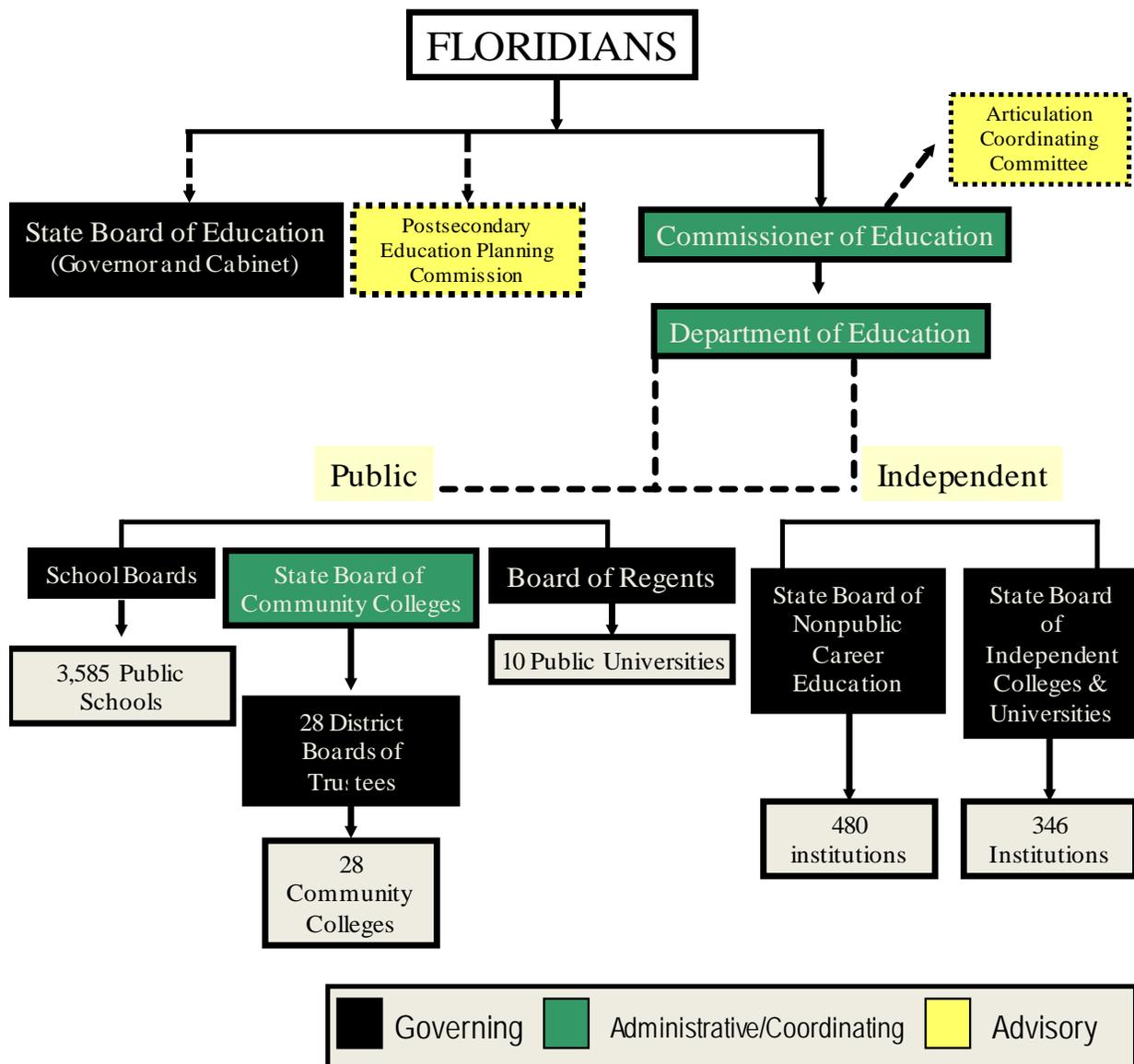
Proposed Washington State Department of Education



Appendix C

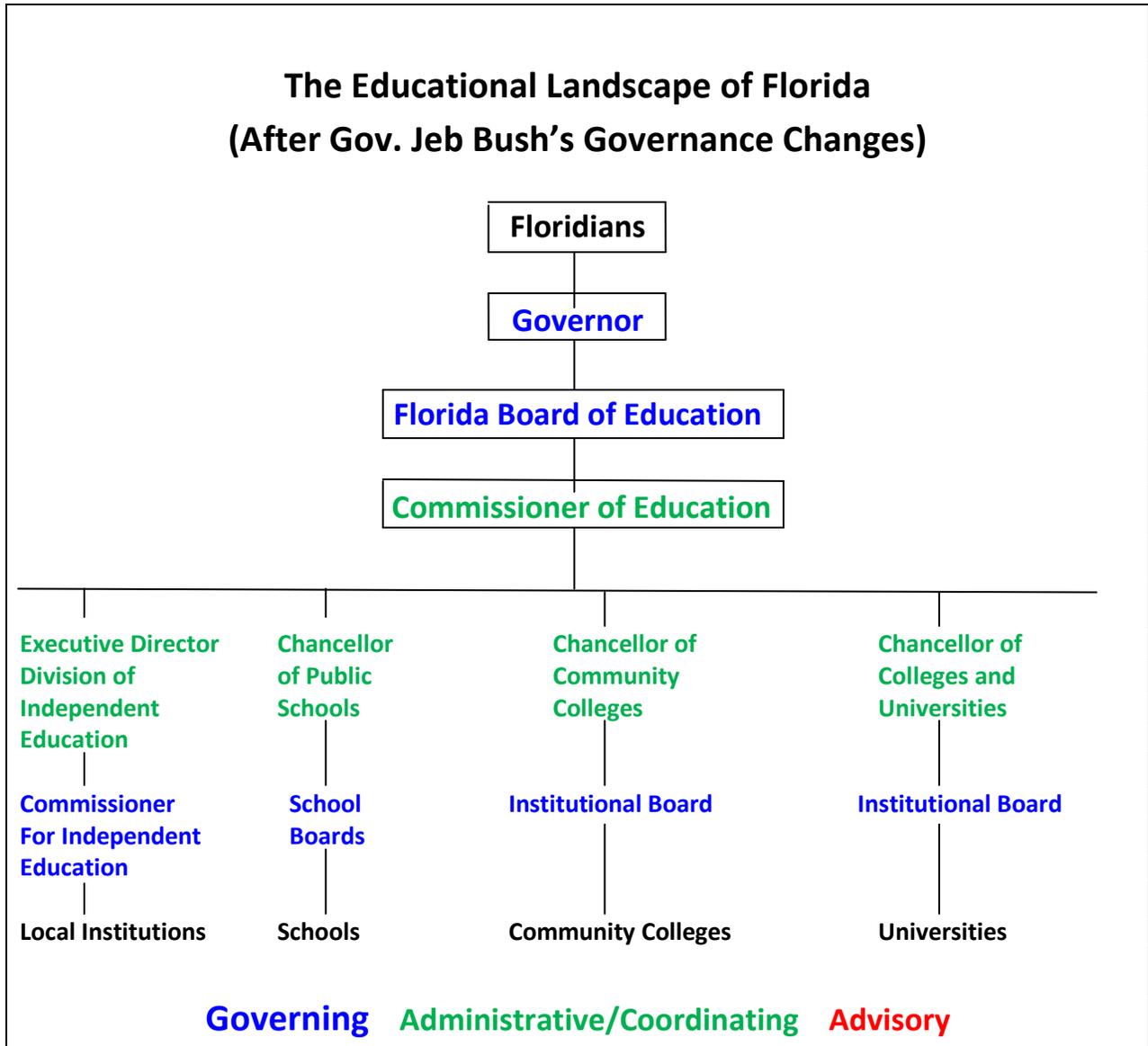
Florida's Governance Before Education Re-Organization

Florida Governance, 2001 (Before Gov. Bush's Governance Changes)



Appendix C

Florida's Governance After Education Re-Organization



Appendix D

Minnesota Higher Education Governance Structure

