

Frequently Asked Questions

January 3, 2011

Q: What are the recommendations the Higher Education Funding Task Force is announcing today?

A: In order to make changes that we believe will create a stronger financial foundation for higher education in Washington state, the task force is recommending the following:

1. The State adopt a new financial formula for the public four-year universities that better combines state budget support with increased flexibility for the universities to set their own tuition rates.
2. The State take a new, innovative, and sustainable step to provide financial aid for low- and middle income Washington students who want to attend college by creating the Washington Pledge Scholarship Program.
3. The State put in place concrete steps to continue to promote accountability and performance by the State's public universities.

To achieve these objectives, the Task Force recommends:

1. Increasing the number of Washington residents graduating with bachelor's degrees from Washington's colleges and universities, especially in high demand fields — science, technology, engineering, and math.
2. Providing the universities with increased flexibility to set tuition — linked to the level of state support and to the tuition charged by each institution's peer colleges.
3. Expanding financial assistance to low- and middle- income students through a combination of private and public strategies, including a \$1 billion endowment fund and tax incentives.
4. Holding each public university accountable for graduating more students with bachelor's degrees, giving incoming students credit for high school coursework, community college studies and prior learning experiences, and revamping some academic programs.

Q: What was the goal of the Task Force?

A: The goal of the Task Force was to bring together people from a diverse range of perspectives to discuss the roles played by various institutions, how they are funded, and how they are held accountable for producing results. Our goal was to make recommendations on how to improve the quality of the state's higher education system and its ability to support the economic vitality of the state – ultimately we want to increase over the next decade the number of Washington students who earn a college degree.

Q: Why is the Task Force focusing on higher education and not K-12?

A: The Higher Education Funding Task Force was appointed by Governor Gregoire with a request to develop a long-term strategic approach for maximizing the impact and effectiveness of Washington's public investment in higher education. But education must be viewed as an integrated system, from early learning through college, and so support for a strong K-12 is also important.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who comprises the Task Force?

A: The Task Force is comprised of individuals from education, private and public sector interests. The members include:

- Brad Smith (Chair), Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Microsoft Corporation
- Dean Allen, CEO, McKinstry Company
- Bill Ayer, Chair and CEO, Alaska Air
- Maud Daudon, President & CEO, Seattle Northwest Securities
- Charlie Earl, Director, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- Jesus Hernandez, Chair, Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Michael Kluse, Senior Vice President, Battelle
- Alex McGregor, President & CEO, The McGregor Company
- Laura Peterson, Vice President, Boeing Company
- Thomas L. “Les” Purce, President, Evergreen State College
- Paula Reynolds, CEO, Preferwest LLC
- Chris Rivera, President, Washington Biotechnology and Biomedical Association
- Paul Rosier, Executive Director, Washington Association of School Administrators
- Judith Runstad, Foster Pepper LLC
- Ray Stephanson, Mayor of Everett
- David Tang, Managing Partner, K&L Gates LLP

Q: What actions are to take place as a result of these recommendations?

A: We would like to see these recommendations adopted by the state Legislature this session.

Q: What kind of legislative approval will be needed to approve these recommendations?

A: We will need a majority vote of both the House and Senate, and a signature by the Governor.

Q: What is the Washington Pledge Scholarship?

A: The Washington Pledge Scholarship would be a new endowment program, with a goal of raising \$1 billion over the next 10 years that will help future generations of Washington students attend college. This scholarship will provide much needed help for low to middle income Washington students seeking to earn a bachelor’s degree at our public two and four-year colleges and universities. Private donations from both individuals and business will fund the endowment. Donations could be targeted to specific programs or students.