



November 2008

## **Policy and Demographic Analysis Work Group Draft Report and Recommendations**

In the past, higher education served those who applied and enrolled in our colleges. Today, simply responding to those who apply is not enough – not enough to produce the people with the skills our industries need, and not enough to equitably serve the changing population of our state.

Today, the fastest-growing groups of K-12 students are those from low-income families, immigrants, and students of color. And today, the adult population includes over a million under-educated, under-skilled workers who struggle to make ends meet and to provide for their children.

Low income and minority teens and under-educated adults are less likely to seek postsecondary education, and less likely to complete college programs when they do enroll.

This is the fundamental reality that must change if our economy is to grow and our state is to prosper. As the wave of baby boomer retirements crests, Washington employers will face growing shortages of skilled workers, managers, and leaders. We do not have any people to squander.

That's why the Policy and Pipeline Work Group focused on three critical areas: understanding the demographics of the under-educated, examining what policies and practices help them enter and succeed in postsecondary education, and creating a coherent set of recommendations that can reverse the trends that continue to leave so many behind.

This work focuses on *what Washington's higher education system can do* to improve education, job, and life outcomes for the groups of young people and adults who are currently least likely to benefit from higher education.

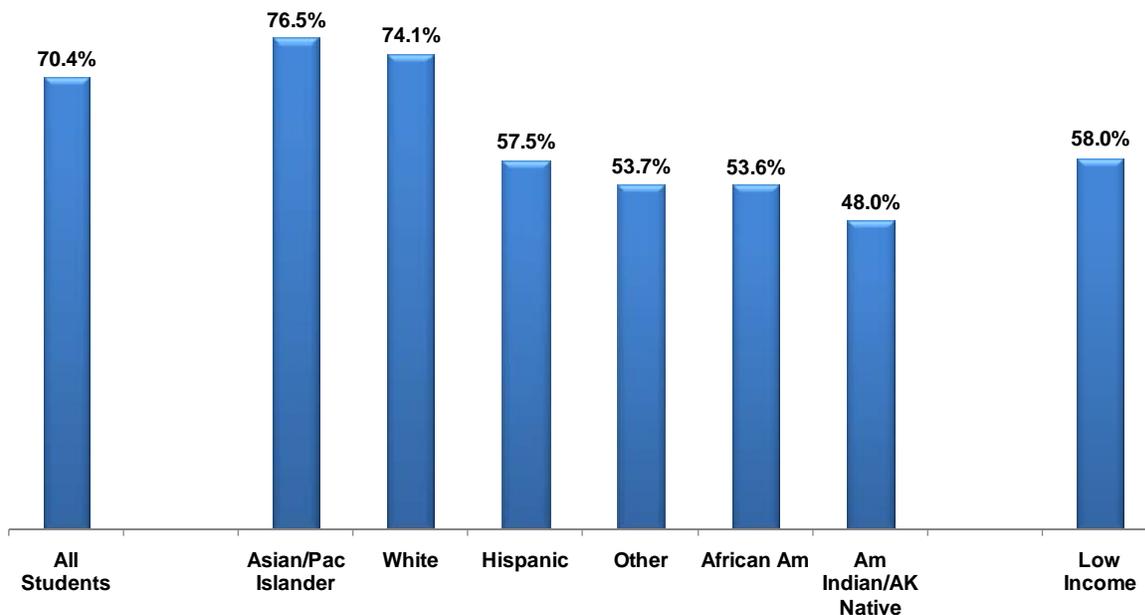
## Demographic Focus Areas

There is no mystery about who is under-represented in postsecondary education:

- Low income youth and adults of all races
- African-American, Native-American, Latino youth and adults, and specific sub-groups of Asian/Pacific Islander youth and adults

These under-represented groups are less likely to graduate from high school, less likely to enroll in college programs, and less likely to complete programs when they do enroll.

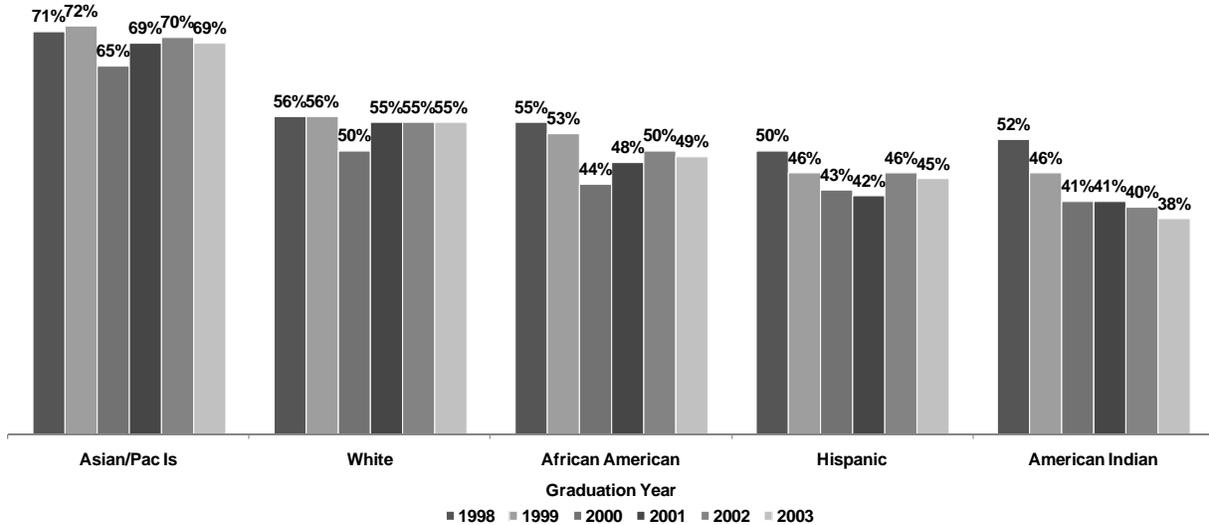
**Graduation rates for low-income, American Indian, African American, and Hispanic students are lower than the state average: Class of 2006**



Source: Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The 2006 *Diversity in Washington Higher Education Report*, published by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, found that direct-to-college enrollment among African-American, Latino, and Native American high school graduates actually declined between 1998 and 2003.

**Asian/Pacific Islander and white high school graduates are more likely to go directly to college than American Indian, African American, and Hispanic graduates**



Source: HECB, Diversity in Washington Higher Education (September 2006). Based on data from WSU SESRC, Washington State Graduate Follow-up Study (various years).

**Public Four-Year Institution Six-Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity and for Pell Grant Recipients: By fall 2005**

<b>Total</b>	64.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	51.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	69.5%
African American	47.1%
Hispanic/Latino	56.5%
White	64.6%
<b>Pell Grant Recipients</b>	<b>62.5%</b>

Notes: Graduation rates include the entering freshmen who earn degrees within six years of beginning their studies and transfer students with associate degrees who earn bachelor’s degrees within three years. The cohort includes first-time, full-time students only.

Source: HECB (September 2006), *Diversity in Washington Higher Education*, for the rates by racial/ethnic group. HECB (December 2006), *Accountability for Student Success in Washington Higher Education*, for rate for Pell Grant recipients.

**SBCTC Student Progress by Racial/Ethnic Group – Full-time Students, by 2005**

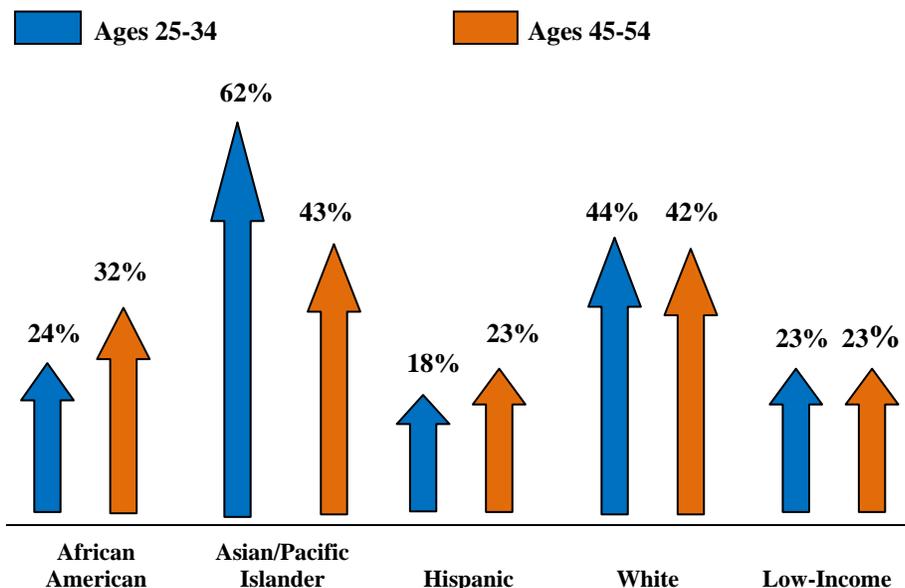
Racial/Ethnic Group	Making Substantial	
	Progress	Early Leavers
White	62%	16%
American Indian	47%	28%
Hispanic	46%	33%
Asian-Pacific Islander	64%	15%
African American	50%	26%

Note: Student retention is based on progress made by students who enroll for the purpose of obtaining an associate degree at community and technical colleges and who enroll in a professional/technical program at technical colleges. SBCTC measures degree-seeking student progress by the number of successful quarters enrolled over a two-year period. Making “substantial progress” are students with degree plans graduating or earning some credit in four or more quarters over the two-year period. “Early leavers” are students with degree plans not earning any credit or earning credit in only one quarter and not returning within two years’ time.

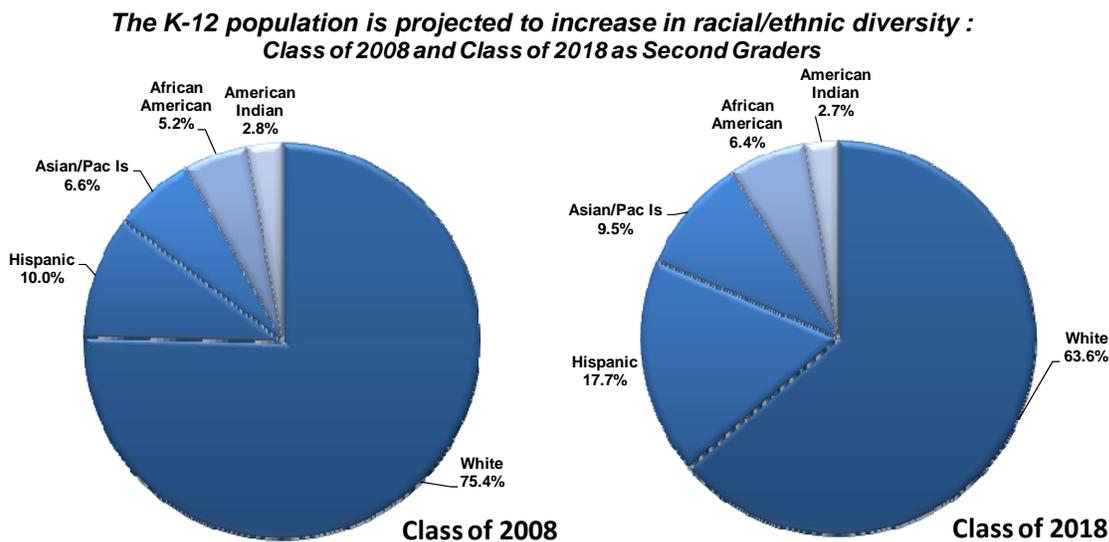
Source: SBCTC, *Academic Year Report 2006-07*.

This trend is reflected over a longer term in the generational comparison between baby boomers and younger adult workers in these groups:

**Postsecondary Attainment by Age Group and Race/Ethnicity  
Percent Holding Associate Degree or Higher**



Moreover, the proportion of low income children and children of color in our state's population is growing. The younger the population we examine, the greater the proportion of under-represented people we find.



Source: WICHE projections from *Knocking on College Door*, March 2008.

### ***Changing Demographics, High School Graduation Rates, Direct-to-College Enrollment Rates***

To illustrate the changing demographics in our K-12 system, the figure above compares the racial/ethnic composition of the Class of 2008 and Class of 2018 as second graders.<sup>1</sup> The data show that the class of 2018 will be more diverse than the class of 2008. Most of the diversity is the result of growth in the Hispanic population, with smaller growth in the Asian/Pacific Islander and African American populations.

The combination of declining educational attainment and growth in the numbers of under-represented groups spells impending crisis for Washington. And the problem we face is not just that we are failing to make progress with these groups of students. The problem is that we are sliding steadily backward. This is the trend we must reverse – quickly – if we are to achieve and sustain prosperity for our state.

<sup>1</sup> Although the students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are not exactly the students who will be 12<sup>th</sup> graders, the racial/ethnic composition of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class provides an indication as to the changing demographics of our middle and high school students.

## What Works

Programs in Washington and around the country provide a rich source of information about what really helps persuade low income students and students of color to enroll in college, and what helps them succeed once they get there.

For students from under-represented groups – even more than traditional college students – learning requires relationships of trust, a sense of belonging to a learning community, and ongoing support and encouragement.

## What Works to Recruit and Retain K-12 Graduates

There are many programs that provide these attributes; from them it's possible to derive a clear set of principles for success:

- **A college-going culture.** When all students are expected to graduate from high school and go directly to some form of college or career preparation program, they are likely to rise to this expectation.
- **Early outreach.** These programs – often based on partnerships between K-12 schools and colleges – are most effective when they begin in elementary school and involve families in consistent and ongoing activities that raise expectations and help children focus on preparing for their future.
- **Early promise scholarships.** The promise of scholarships for low-income middle school students has proved effective in other states and is being replicated in Washington with the new College Bound Scholarship program.
- **Academic and career planning courses.** Middle and high school courses that build students' knowledge and skill in navigating the education system to reach their personal goals increase students' likelihood of taking rigorous high school classes and enrolling in college.
- **Mentoring.** Role models, mentors, and long-term personal relationships with caring adults are key to student success. College students have been shown to be effective mentors.
- **Highly qualified, well prepared teachers.** Teacher preparation and professional development programs play a key role in K-12 student success.
- **Culturally relevant college preparation.** Many students need help to “walk in two worlds” – the world of their family's culture and the world of academic aspiration and college enrollment. Culture-specific college prep programs help bridge these worlds.

- **Dual-credit programs.** The ability to earn college credit at little or no cost while still in high school provides confidence, a connection to higher education, and significant savings. Dual-credit programs are valuable both to those who aspire to a four-year or graduate degree and those who are aiming for vocational skills or apprenticeship programs.
- **Pre-enrollment orientation and transition.** Early opportunities to visit college campuses and interact with college students and faculty help low-income, first-generation college-goers understand and prepare for the academic rigor and the culture of college.
- **Intensive, ongoing support for first generation students.** Colleges that offer ample mentoring, tutoring, and social support to low income students and students of color – especially during their freshman year – show increases in student retention and success.
- **Debt-avoidance strategies.** Low income families and students fear student debt, so financial aid and incentive programs that help students avoid it are effective.

### What Works for Recruiting and Retaining Working Adults

Working adults – especially those stuck in low-wage, dead-end jobs – face many barriers to enrolling or returning to college. Competing demands of family and work, transportation, child care, and cost all play a role in cutting people off from educational opportunity. Language barriers, undiagnosed learning disabilities, and past academic frustrations also discourage people from pursuing new skills and knowledge.

The following principles focus on what our state’s higher education system can do to reach out to adults:

- **Flexible schedules and convenient class locations.** Evening and weekend classes, access to libraries, advising, and year-round enrollment services in convenient locations make learning more accessible. Taking learning off college campuses also reduces the intimidation factor for some learners.
- **Child care.** Students with children need this service when and where their classes are held.
- **Financial aid for part time students.** Federal financial aid is unavailable to part-time students, but most working adults can only attend part time.
- **Outreach to former students.** When students leave before completing a program, they can often be persuaded to return. When colleges take the initiative to contact them, doors that closed can open again.

- **Integrated basic education and skills training.** Combining academic and vocational skills – and English language instruction – shortens the time needed to earn a skills certificate and increases students chances for persistence and program completion.
- **Certificate programs that articulate with more advanced degrees.** Many students need to learn skills quickly to support their families. Short-term skills certificate programs fill these need. But they are most useful when there is a pathway beyond the skill certificate, so that students can return to upgrade their skills and earn degrees.
- **Online and hybrid courses, and online advising and support.** The ability to take courses “anytime, anywhere” frees working adults from the barriers of transportation, child care, and work schedule conflicts. Easy to use online advising, planning, and registration tools are also helpful.
- **Early intervention for struggling students, and student advising and support.** People who lack experience navigating higher education get lost in the system; they need more help to map their route to achieving their goals and more tutoring and mentoring. Data systems that identify early signs that a student is struggling, coupled with these tutoring and advising services, can help steer students back on course for success.
- **Employer partnerships.** Classes that connect directly to workplace opportunities, offered at the work site, can help both students and their employers thrive.
- **Credit for prior learning.** Adult students often come with knowledge and skills learned in the workplace. Systems that allow these students to gain credits by passing tests, or creating portfolios that demonstrate their competence, can both encourage and accelerate their degree or certificate completion.

To assess how to make the biggest gains in educational attainment for under-represented K-12 graduates and adults, several policy considerations arise: Where are the gaps in service around the state? Which programs have clear evidence of effectiveness? Which are scalable? What is the state’s role? How do we balance short- and long-term considerations?

## Policy Recommendations

In a perfect world, our policy recommendation would be simple: Bring all of the programs and strategies that work to scale immediately and weave them together to create a web of support and success for under-represented students of all ages. But, in today’s world, that is not an option. Instead, we recommend strategic choices in three stages:

- Support for effective current state-supported efforts,
- Limited, strategic new initiatives that build on these efforts, and
- An agenda for future work.

These recommendations are designed to support four goals that will improve educational attainment for under-represented groups:

- Create a college-going culture for all families,
- Build the K-12 pipeline,
- Build the re-entry pipeline for adult workers, and
- Improve persistence and degree or certificate completion.

## **Policy Recommendation I: Create a College-Going Culture**

Some children grow up in households where going to college is an expectation from birth. But among low-income families and families of color, the opposite is often true: children grow up believing that college is beyond their reach and outside their culture. Among under-educated adults, similar assumptions turn dreams to dust and perpetuate a legacy of limited expectations.

This must change if we are to raise the blue arrow in Washington.

We need an overarching, sustained statewide marketing campaign to build a college-going culture for all families. Messages matter and sustained marketing has the power to change public opinion. Such a campaign can create universal understanding of the need for all K-12 graduates and adults to engage in some form of postsecondary education and raise the expectations of under-represented students to this level.

This will require research on how to reach and persuade students and families from diverse cultures. It will also require a new and higher level of expectation for all students in our public schools.

A campaign ambitious enough to be effective will require strong partnerships with private sector employers and with community, faith, and non-profit organizations across the state.

## **Policy Recommendation II: Build the K-12 Pipeline**

### **Continue Support for Successful State-Supported Programs**

We should continue to support the following effective programs:

- Early outreach programs such as GEAR-UP,
- The state's new College Bound Scholarship, which promises financial aid to students in middle school,
- Dual-credit programs that award both high school and college credit,
- Navigation 101 courses that teach students how to set goals and navigate the education system, and
- Dropout prevention efforts underway in the Building Bridges Program.

**New Initiative: Create an Integrated College Access Network – I-CAN**

To increase college-going rates among underserved K-12 students, we propose to create an Integrated College Access Network – I-CAN.

This network will build on successful early outreach, early scholarship, career planning courses, dual-credit programs, and dropout prevention work already in place. I-CAN will draw these programs together into a coordinated effort and augment them with a new mentoring program that draws from the ranks of successful college students.

College student mentors will be trained in leadership, community outreach, and strategies for working with diverse students. These students can be deployed as aides in Navigation 101 courses, as tutors, and as college-enrollment guides. Students who serve as mentors will receive class credit for doing so and this program can be linked with teacher preparation coursework. Chambers of Commerce may want to partner in this effort, as they have a strong “Leadership Tomorrow” curriculum to bring to the table.

Recent college graduates – eventually including those who have benefited from this program – could also be recruited to serve as mentors and college guides.

Other key components of I-CAN are:

- Very early outreach to children and their families, including opening GET accounts for all children when they enroll in public schools. GET units might be deposited in these accounts by the state as students meet academic benchmarks. Families could also be encouraged to save for college by making it possible to buy GET units in smaller increments.
- Aggressive marketing of the state’s new College Bound Scholarship, which offers a promise of financial aid to seventh graders when they graduate from high school. This marketing would link this scholarship with other college access programs.
- Guaranteed financial aid for low-income high school students for enrollment in dual-credit programs while they are in high school. While most of these programs do not charge tuition, the costs of books, fees, and transportation present barriers for low-income families.
- Incorporation of coursework and internships for prospective teachers and school counselors that build skills for helping students from under-represented groups plan for their futures, raise their expectations, and successfully navigate the education system to help them achieve their dreams.

## **Future Work**

To better measure both individual and system progress in raising educational attainment among under-represented groups, we need to conduct more focused research. To do this, we should assess the feasibility of creating a unique P-20 student identifier that would make it possible to pinpoint both effective practices and gaps in services.

There is also potential for further expansion of dual credit programs that encourage students of color and students from low-income families to enroll in postsecondary education.

## **Policy Recommendation III: Build the Re-entry Pipeline for Adults**

Younger adults are, on the whole, less educated than their parents' generation. This is the reverse of education trends in the nations with whom we compete in the global economy. Addressing the education and job skill needs of younger workers is essential to this state's employers, communities, and families.

### **Continuing Support for Successful State-Supported Programs**

Three recent initiatives have proved very effective in helping working adults learn new skills and move up a career ladder:

- Opportunity Grants that provide financial aid and support services for people entering workforce training programs,
- Bachelor of Applied Sciences degrees that build on workforce training as well as academic coursework and are offered in some universities and community and technical colleges, and
- Integrated basic education and skills training (I-BEST) programs that combine academic, English language, and job skills instruction and thereby shorten the time it takes for students to complete programs and get better jobs.

### **New Initiative: “Try College” – a New, Free Class with a Bonus Course for Those Who Complete It**

Working adults who have never taken college classes or who have not done so in many years need help to get started or re-started. To help them do so, we propose to create a free online and on-campus college and career planning course designed by teams of faculty and advisors from multiple colleges. The course will help prospective students inventory their own skills, interests and aptitudes. It will provide a virtual tour of what is available in Washington's higher education system and help connect prospective students with programs that match their personal goals. This course will also provide information about what job and career opportunities exist in their communities and focus on areas where there are skill shortages. It will also offer personalized advising on how to apply, get financial aid, and enroll.

These activities will lead to the establishment of a personal relationship between the student and the college in which they find the program they need, and a clear academic and career plan.

By pooling enrollments for the online version of this course through Washington Online, the course could have multiple start dates, independent of regular college schedules, so that prospective students could enroll year-round.

This course will also come with a bonus: those who complete it will be eligible to take another class that gets them started on their plan, tuition-free, at any participating college or university, either in person or online.

### **Future Work**

In years to come, we should develop a system for awarding college credit for prior learning and identify specific strategies to re-enroll those who earned Associate degrees in baccalaureate programs and those who earned some college credit but never completed a degree.

## **Policy Recommendation IV: Improving Persistence and Completion**

Under-represented students are less likely to complete programs and degrees. Removing the barriers to their success and building a network of support for these students are critical to achieving our goals.

### **Continuing Support for Successful State-Supported Programs**

Students are more likely to persist and complete their education when they are well prepared, have sufficient financial resources, and benefit from meaningful personal support from faculty and staff.

Thus, it is no surprise that what is working is the State Need Grant, special state funding for student support services, programs like I-BEST that accelerate program completion, and programs like the Transition Math Project that ensure students begin college well-prepared.

### **New Initiative: Expand the State Work Study Program**

We propose to expand State Work Study funding and dedicate these new funds to high-demand, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields and mentoring for K-12 students.

This will build on early outreach efforts to encourage K-12 students to pursue careers in STEM fields. It will provide more financial assistance for under-represented groups of students.

It is also an opportunity to strengthen the connection between college and careers. In partnership with STEM employers, work study jobs can provide real-world experiences that open doors, help students refine their own career goals, and encourage program or degree completion.

Employers will work with colleges, universities, and HECB to develop these opportunities.

### **Future Work**

To continue to improve persistence and degree or certificate completion, we need to extend successful institutional initiatives to encourage enrollment in STEM and other high-demand fields and identify which programs are most successful for under-represented students. This could include exploration of specific funding incentives for the production of degrees in high-demand fields, for meeting other goals of the strategic master plan for higher education, and possible expansion or replication of the SBCTC Student Achievement Initiative.

To increase the use of technology as a means of making learning available anytime/anywhere, we should also convene a task force to address technology and e-learning and examine the SBCTC Strategic Technology Plan and other models.

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**Appendix B. Summary of Policy Group’s Recommendations**

**Summary of Recommended Current State-Supported Efforts,  
New Statewide Initiatives, and Further Work**

Effective Current Efforts	New Statewide Initiatives	Future Work
<b>Create a College-Going Culture for All Families</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Overarching, sustained statewide marketing campaign</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Market research on effective messages and deployment for target populations: K-12 students of color and students from low-income families and younger, working adults.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Building a K-12 Pipeline</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GEAR UP (early outreach and intervention).</li> <li>• College Bound Scholarship (early promise).</li> <li>• Dual credit (transition to college).</li> <li>• Navigation 101 (K-12 counseling and advising).</li> <li>• Building Bridges (K-12 dropout prevention and intervention).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Integrated College Access Network (I-CAN)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Very early outreach to children and their families.</li> <li>✓ Aggressive marketing of College Bound Scholarship.</li> <li>✓ Trained college students as mentors for K-12 students.</li> <li>✓ Coursework on college-going culture for prospective teachers and school counselors.</li> <li>✓ Guaranteed financial aid for low-income high school students enrolled in dual credit programs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More research to identify gaps in services that help under-represented groups of students.</li> <li>• Improve data tracking/evaluation capabilities for better measurement of student and system progress with the possibility of a unique P-20 student identifier.</li> <li>• Future expansion of dual credit programs that encourage students of color and students from low-income families to enroll in college.</li> </ul>

Effective Current Efforts	New Statewide Initiatives	Future Work
<b>Building a Reentry Pipeline</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity Grants (workforce development, financial aid, support services).</li> <li>• Bachelor of Applied Science (increase degree production opportunities).</li> <li>• Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs (ABE/ESL with workforce training courses).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Try College</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop free, online college and career planning course.</li> <li>✓ Provide course through Washington Online, pooling enrollments to provide year-round start dates.</li> <li>✓ Course completers eligible for a tuition-free, credit-bearing course either online or on a college campus.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote strategies to re-engage adults with some college credit but no degree.</li> <li>• Identify strategies to re-engage academic associate degree holders who did not transfer to a baccalaureate degree program.</li> <li>• Develop a statewide system for awarding college credit for prior learning.</li> <li>• Promote strategies to re-engage adults who lack job skills and academic skills to succeed in college.</li> </ul>
<b>Improving Persistence and Completion</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Need Grant (financial assistance).</li> <li>• State student persistence funding (support services).</li> <li>• I-BEST (ESL/ABE + college credit courses).</li> <li>• Transition Math Project (college readiness in math, STEM preparation).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Expand State Work Study Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide financial assistance and experiential learning.</li> <li>✓ Dedicate new funds to work in high demand fields including science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields and mentoring for K-12 students.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify successful institutional initiatives for statewide expansion to encourage enrollment into STEM and other high-demand fields and to improve retention and completion.</li> <li>• Explore funding incentives, such as premium funding and the Student Achievement.</li> <li>• Convene a task force to address technology and e-learning in relation to increasing capacity, access, and success. Consider the SBCTC’s Strategic Technology Plan as a model.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>