

# Work of the Unified Educational Enterprise

## Background

### Policy Framework for a Unified Education System

Alignment and especially PreK-16 implies an education system that integrates a student's education from kindergarten through a four-year college degree and beyond. Although PreK-16 alignment tends to focus on transition to college, our definition of alignment includes student transition to the work force and to all post-high school options. In essence, students will need to have the skills necessary to be successful within K-12 and be prepared for the rigors and demands of both college and the work place.

One of the key goals of a PreK-16 system is to streamline and clarify the array of high school examinations and college entrance and placement procedures into a logical, understandable process.

Another goal is to make it easier for high school students to enroll in college courses prior to graduation and to ensure that these courses count towards college credit. This will help eliminate unnecessary repetition of courses and assessments. Such a system will also account for the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency through a variety of methods including traditional assessments, course completion, proficiency-based assessments and credits, and other viable means.

Agreeing on a common set of standards that describe what students should know and be able to do at all levels, aligning those standards, and providing students with accurate and reliable information as they prepare to transition to their next steps will help remove artificial barriers that hamper student success and access to further education and training.

## Key Elements of an Aligned Education Enterprise

1. A standards-based education system based on agreed-upon common core proficiencies with rigorous standards and learning outcomes for all students PreK-16.
2. Clearly defined and articulated pathways that allow all students of all ages to smoothly enter and exit the education enterprise and make informed decisions regarding education and training options and opportunities.
3. Clear, consistent, frequent, and cross-sector communication that informs students of their options and opportunities (communication to include parents, teachers, counselors, teachers, faculty, administrators, Boards, and other stakeholders).
4. Agreed-upon credentials that are accepted as awards and recognitions of a student's demonstrated level of proficiency.
5. State assessments of student learning and outcomes.
6. Assessments that are aligned to state standards and inform teaching and learning.
7. Integrated data systems that allow for transfer of student records including learning and achievement (profile of proficiency) across systems and institutions.

The above seven components are integral to the work plan for the Unified Educational Enterprise for the next several years. Current work is under way on each component, and investment by all system stakeholders and legislators will determine the speed with which they are implemented.

## Strategic Plan for 2008-2011

### 2008-09 Strategic Plan

If Oregon is to meet its "40:40:20" goal (40% of its citizens having a Bachelor's degree; 40% having an Associate's degree or credential; 20% having a high school diploma) by 2025, student success is critical. The Unified Education Enterprise (UEE) work plan for 2008-09 will focus on two issues that influence whether Oregon students understand the range of educational opportunities available to them, and whether they are adequately prepared at each stage to progress to the next.

- I. Alignment of curricular content and academic expectations throughout the pK-16 education system
- II. Understanding of educational opportunities through improved communication

#### I. Alignment of Curricular Content and Academic Expectations

1. Implement the new HS diploma:
  - o Align the levels of proficiency in four Essential Skills (Reading, Writing, Applying Mathematics, and Speaking), and the means for determining them, with postsecondary expectations.
  - o Create a crosswalk of equivalent proficiency metrics for skills that can be assessed by multiple methods.
  - o Analyze current measures of Essential Skills proficiency by comparing past 10<sup>th</sup> grade OAKS scores in Writing and Mathematics with subsequent college/university performance in closely-related course work (e.g., WR121 and 122/3 or Math courses at or above the 100-level).
  - o Promote thoughtful consideration of the Essential Skills by both high school teachers and postsecondary faculty. Continue the fruitful communication that was initiated by the Essential Skills Task Forces.
2. Establish consistent International Baccalaureate (IB) score/credit relationships at all 24 community colleges and OUS institutions.
3. Ensure the effectiveness of Dual Credit programs by adopting statewide standards that emphasize:
  - o strong interactions between the instructors of Dual Credit courses and their college/university counterparts;

- regular, comprehensive analysis of Dual Credit students' subsequent academic performance
  - communication of effective practices
4. Complete and apply the statewide criteria for freely transferable General Education courses. Ask cross-sector faculty groups to use the new criteria to determine the status of courses that are now only partially transferrable.
  5. Explore the possibility of creating statewide pathways in targeted areas. Supplementing the current pattern of individual campus Pathway Programs has the potential to create offerings that exceed an individual institution's capacity. An example is creating "sustainable energy" first year programs at many community colleges and allowing these programs to count toward an AS degree program at one or two community colleges.

## **II. Understanding of educational opportunities through improved communication**

1. Clarify information about postsecondary programs and illustrate possible routes through them:
  - Programs that give high school students access to college-level courses should be well-publicized;
  - Information about academic programs and financial aid should be clear and readily accessible to students and parents;
  - Career training options should be clearly presented and easy to find; and
  - Pathways that can take students from one program to another should be clearly shown.
2. Create an Oregon Web Portal to increase understanding of educational opportunities, raise awareness of the academic preparation needed for college, and educate students and their families about the attainability of postsecondary education:
  - General information that will allow students of any age or situation to anticipate their next steps should be identified and made public. It is essential to convey the availability of financial aid and scholarships, and to present the actual cost of education for students in various circumstances.
  - Specialized information about program requirements and academic preparation should be consistently available to counselors and faculty in high schools, community colleges, and universities.

## 2009-2011 Strategic Plan

The alignment efforts of the Joint Boards will continue to meet students' needs for access to education, academic success, and career attainment. The following efforts will move forward:

1. Improved tracking and cross-sector connection of student data, combined with effective use of data to identify successful approaches and barriers.
2. Increased program articulation and more approved pathways.
3. Improved teacher/faculty communication throughout the education continuum.
4. An expanded ATLAS that includes community colleges.
5. Improved access to postsecondary learning.
6. Improved success at meeting individual career goals. This includes review of the effectiveness of student participation and completion initiatives.
7. Pilot strategies to decrease the gap in access, progress, or goal attainment between Oregonians of differing racial/ethnic, geographic, or socioeconomic backgrounds.
8. Improved rural access to postsecondary education.
9. Improved communication and marketing for access and success, designed for Oregon students, counselors, parents, and businesses.