The Restructuring of the State Board of Higher Education’s Student Participation & Completion Committee to **ONWARD:**

**Oregon Net-Work for Access, Retention, and Degree Completion**

**Background**

Last year the Oregon State Board of Higher Education made a set of governance changes to the organization of its committees. One change was to consolidate a number of former committees, subcommittees, working groups, and task teams under the umbrella of a new Standing Committee called the Academic Strategies Committee. Other Standing Committees of the Board include: Finance & Administration and Governance & Policy.

Much of the work and contributions of the former Student Participation & Completion Committee (P&C) has now been folded into the work of the Academic Strategies Committee (ASC), including foci on initiatives for underserved students, such as Latino and Rural Student Access; Student Retention and Success; Portland Higher Education access; and Central Oregon Higher Education. Individual leaders have been assigned to each of these initiatives, and they are gathering information from resource teams and stakeholders in each area in order to arrive at recommendations.

**ONWARD: Oregon Net-Work for Access, Retention, and Degree Completion**

Given these changes, the P&C Committee has evolved into the **Oregon Net-Work for Access, Retention and Degree Completion, or ONWARD**, that will have a new focus in areas which support the ASC and the Board’s long-term strategic focus. The work of the ONWARD team will focus on no-cost, low-cost approaches to outreach with its higher education and education partners and, where possible, obtain additional resources from foundations and other grant-making organizations, as appropriate. Because ONWARD is not an official committee or working group, it will not be a body which makes recommendations itself, but instead will help the ASC initiative leaders to facilitate their work by using its networks to seek community input and engagement and thereby help to move Committee objectives from planning to implementation.

**Structure:**

ONWARD will be led by Board of Higher Education members Dalton Miller-Jones and Rosemary Powers. The network will coordinate with Board initiatives to convene and collect input from leaders and practitioners representing a broad spectrum of Oregon’s communities, including populations that are currently underserved in postsecondary education. Those involved with ONWARD may include former members of the P&C Committee as well as former panelists and consultants of the P&C among others who will be asked to act as resource specialists for specific purposes. There will not be permanent members of ONWARD as the need for different types of community engagement will arise with different initiatives. Network participants will be expected to act as representatives by bringing information vetted with the group to their own communities throughout the state for input. Chancellor’s Office staff will support ONWARD, including Joe Holliday, Endi Hartigan, and Di Saunders.
The three main components of the work of ONWARD include:

1. **Faculty engagement in student success** (led by Rosemary Powers);
2. **Convening higher education and education practitioners** through a biannual symposium and mini-conferences/meetings across the state on a more frequent basis, that address critical issues identified by the ASC and ONWARD, such as student preparation, retention and success, rural and first generation students issues, etc. Based on input collected from community stakeholders, ONWARD will provide frameworks to facilitate moving ASC’s agenda forward towards action; and
3. Coordinate with ASC initiative leaders to continue to support and achieve the capacity of pre-college preparation programs and in-college support programs for Oregon students in order to increase educational attainment rates, particularly for underserved students. In-college retention is being covered by the ASC Retention initiative. Pre-college outreach and preparation goals may result from the Rural Oregon, Portland, or Latino student initiatives, but are not currently a specific initiative item for the ASC. Board Directors on ONWARD will help coordinate the work of the Joint Boards’ Unified Education Enterprise (UEE) and other PreK-12 and Community College programs and initiatives on behalf of ASC.

**Faculty Engagement**

ONWARD will work under the guidance of Dr. Rosemary Powers to lead its faculty engagement activities in support of the ASC Retention initiative, staffed by Joe Holliday. The network will work with the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate (IFS) as well as on-campus programs and centers, such as the Center for Academic Excellence, to help plan, coordinate, and implement conversations and efforts to improve faculty effectiveness. The objective is to work through existing faculty networks to further engage faculty in helping with student retention and success through their pedagogy, classroom approaches, and engagement with students in- and outside of the classroom environment. One of the roles of this component will be to identify strategic needs for innovative approaches to and support for faculty engagement by the ASC of the Oregon Board of Higher Education. This follows the philosophy that “student retention is everyone’s job on the campus.”

**Issues Convening**

Given the P&C committee’s success with its *Breaking Barriers* and *Day 1 to Degree* symposia held in fall 2007 and 2009, and its work in convening “town halls” and focus groups to better understand the barriers and issues facing particular student populations, ONWARD will continue to play a role in this collecting public input. Besides working with ASC to identify a large, biannual symposium related to the Committee’s work, ONWARD will also coordinate with ASC initiative leaders to hold one to two mini-convenings each year. For example, ONWARD could coordinate with the Rural Access initiative to hold a convening on rural (and first generation ?) student issues at Eastern Oregon University, thereby gaining more information to help move forward the Board’s agenda in this area, while also expanding the network of Oregonians interested in supporting student access and success. Biannual convenings have thus far been sponsored by the Chancellor’s Office, with budgets of $10,000-$13,000. Given budget constraints, the Chancellor’s Office will be exploring ways to charge attendees a minimal registration fee to cover the costs of food for these larger events, which have attracted between 300-400 participants in the past. For more focused theme-based mini-convenings, it will be determined how to fund those, such as partnering with campuses, foundations, nonprofits, businesses, associations, and other groups to help cover costs and not make registration fees a barrier for attendance.
Building Capacity in Pre-college and In-college Student Support Programs
In 2008 and 2009, the P&C Committee worked diligently to develop a Policy Option Package for the Legislature which proposed strategies to increase the capacity of pre-college preparation and enrichment programs in middle and high schools, and to increase the capacity and inclusiveness of in-college support and retention programs for various student populations which are most under-served in the OUS and in other education sectors. Due to funding shortfalls in the 2009 Legislative Session, the Policy Option Package was not funded. Yet the need to ensure that students are academically and otherwise prepared for higher education remains, and more bridges need to be built and supported that connect K-12 and higher education. Lack of academic preparation is one of the identified barriers to students’ ability to be successful in college. ONWARD will work as a partner with the other ASC initiative leaders— and with GEAR UP, ASPIRE, and other pre-college programs – to move forward the pre-college preparation agenda through convenings, developing relationships with campus-based programs, foundations and nonprofits, and helping to facilitate the work of these groups through these networks and the UEE.