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# Post-Secondary Quality Education Commission

## Meeting Minutes

### September 22, 2008

**Members Present:** Ed Ray (co-chair), Roger Bassett, Ryan Deckert, Frank McNamara, Gretchen Pierce, Dick Schwarz, Larry Wolf

**Others Present:** Cam Preus, Nancy Heiligman, George Pernsteiner, Margie Lowe, Brian Collins, Susan Weeks, Joe Johnson

Ed Ray opened the meeting and asked for approval of the July 21, 2008 commission minutes. A motion was made and seconded, and the July minutes were approved unanimously.

Ed Ray asked each subcommittee to report on their activities.

Gretchen Pierce, chair of the Quality Education Goals subcommittee indicated that their work had been completed. As such, the subcommittee has not met and has no meetings scheduled pending further direction from the full commission.

Roger Bassett distributed a written report of the Model Development subcommittee's work and provided a summary of its status:

The 40/40/20 goal includes expectations about how the economy and workforce will change. The context is crucial to the actual achievement of 40/40/20 by the year 2025. The pipeline is the focus of the model we are discussing. It is a calculator model similar to the K-12 QEM that will show the dollars required to educate the full number of students through the pipeline in order to achieve the 40/40/20 goal. That project will be the focus of a three day work session with Dennis Jones (of NCHEMS) in October. So we will have a number of dollars needed to achieve the goal by 2025.

We have created a workgroup that will be co-chaired by Susan Weeks of OUS and Krissa Caldwell of CCWD to work on data issues. We will be developing the model and the data in parallel to speed up the process. They will meet mid-October after Dennis Jones' visit so they will have the benefit of that meeting's results. I have urged the co-chairs to have a free hand in whoever they bring into the group so they will have whoever is needed. By next meeting you should see a picture of a model that would or could do the job. We won't be that far along in working on the questions of data but you will have some sense of how rapidly that might be formed. Note on data: we are not anticipating that our task is to create an actual integrated postsecondary education database. That is a very big task that exceeds any capacity we have. But it is not necessary. We need a dataset that is unique to the model, connected well enough that the data can be used to test the model and show that it can be done. The bigger of those questions that came up in the meeting this morning is how to get a better definition of the middle 40% - certificates/some college. There are a lot of ways of serving those students; it is not the same kind of definition of the 40% baccalaureate degree. We hope the data group will provide a

clean sequence of the steps in the pipeline (student cohorts, instructional steps) from high school to baccalaureate completion. With a lot of help from Nancy we will clean that up so we have a single PSE ladder. The data workgroup has those two assignments: to create that ladder and begin the work to produce a database that can function for the purpose we have.

Ed: At the BS/BA area we are now at about 28% and about 12.5% in not graduating from HS – what were the other numbers?

Frank: 26.3% are HS only and 33.3% are HS+AA or some college.

Cam: Dennis Jones said it's about 22% with a 2 year associates/certificate in the state. 11% with some college.

Roger: Reasonable people disagree about what that number (the middle 40%) is. It is my intent to include “some college” in that number from now on.

Roger discussed his belief that the commission should conduct “Gap analysis,” addressing reasons why we are not achieving 40/40/20, such as lack of retention, and out of state migration. These gaps need to be considered with an eye toward our expectations for the economy in 2025. Gap analysis ought to be part of the ongoing agenda of the commission and should be addressed in the annual report.

Cam: It came to my attention last week that a paper has been written and published that is a collaboration between Oregon's employment department researcher Graham Slater who posed a question to Duncan Wyse and the Governor's office about 40/40/20 and its reality. It is the marriage of Duncan's thinking about how you think about the economy of the future and his portion is coauthored by Joe Cortwright and Graham's part (where we are) is written by another economist in the economic development department, looking at reality and vision of our economy. It came about because they said we don't have the economy today that requires 40/40/20.

Dick: Does the visioning of this future coincide with the timeline we are looking at?

Cam: I believe so.

Roger: I will make that an agenda item for our subcommittee and ask the authors to come and present.

I want the commission to look at 40/40/20 as realistically as we can; it is a part of the context, an economic goal. We need to speak to whether that is the right goal.

Ed: It is important to make sure we know what the workforce scenario is.

Gretchen: I'm back on how in the world do we define quality education, particularly in the post-secondary system. One of the things we discovered 15-20 yrs ago when Duncan and I were working on the first higher education committee, is that employers – and we interviewed a lot of them to find out what they consider to be important; what do they need in their workers? By and large employers thought they were not getting this kind of quality. Communications skills was

number one – can they talk, write, communicate, use critical thinking, whatever that means, basic math and computer skills. There was a big emphasis on team building skills. They aren't hard skills, technical skills. Their view was: "I can teach them the technical stuff if they can walk and talk and learn, but those are the skills that we consider quality education." I found that fascinating and it built a lot of our outcomes because I don't think we're going to know what jobs are required in 2025, I don't think we can predict what sort of economic base we will have in the state, but we can know that a knowledgeable, educated workforce will have those five or six things that employers want. So I think we need to be more thoughtful about what we are calling a quality educated workforce because I don't think employers are looking so much for certain technical skills as for a capacity to learn.

Ed: My guess is if we were to ask employers now we would not get terribly different answers. We could work with employers to ask what they consider a quality post-secondary education, baccalaureate and associates degrees. There are other groups that are trying to get at this issue of outcomes assessment at the postsecondary level and see if they are not moving in ways that are helpful to us. At some point can we benchmark where we are?

Gretchen: Duncan is still in the thick of things; it might be smart to touch bases with him on this issue; he is still chairman of OBC, they are the biggest companies in the state. I think it would be fascinating and might start to form our definition of quality.

Dick: I don't want this to become just about what employers need. It occurs to me there is one group we haven't talked about and that's the faculty, from their perspective what constitutes a quality education?

Ed: That's why I brought up the voluntary system of assessment. They have almost 1,000 colleges and universities who have signed up to help assess outcomes and what outcomes matter. If we can bring those pools of information together we may start getting clarity about where we are and where we want to get to. All of the college and university accrediting agencies are looking for evidence of outcome assessments. So there is a lot of work going on in that direction.

George: We have a lot of faculty who are working together to try to figure out the outcomes of general education. To your point, I think there will be and is information on that. It would be interesting to compare that with what business folks look for. Colleges are looking for the same thing from the high schools and Duncan and I were at a meeting in Washington, DC a week ago and it is clear we expect high schools to produce individuals who have the ability to write, speak, communicate, do basic math, work in teams, etc. Every level of the education system is supposed to produce graduates who are capable of functioning in society successfully at some level. Since everyone is saying the same thing, how do you distinguish quality at the different strike points of 40/40/20? What is the particular role of the high school, college, university, apprenticeship program?

Ed: There is more sophisticated critical thinking and less sophisticated critical thinking. Where do you place the levels of education to demonstrate value added?

Larry: One thing that concerns me with 40/40/20 is the goal of 2025. NCLB sets a goal of 2014. Are we setting up the same kind of situation? I think that is a fine goal, but when you set a date or a year at the beginning you are setting it up for failure. What are the consequences going to be for the K-12 system in 2014?

Ed: Roger and the rest of us this morning discussed this; Roger appropriately put it in context. Let's look at things as is: what would happen in 2025 with business as usual? Is this a realistic goal for 2025? What would it take to achieve it by then, and is that beyond credulity or not? Hopefully, we will learn as we go forward if 40/40/20 itself is the right distribution of the economy. What is attainable at what cost by 2025? We should use these as guide posts at this point.

Ryan: My thoughts on 40/40/20 are: this state desperately needs a focus around its education infrastructure; it provides some sort of rational focus that you can pencil out with the revenue forecast, long-term. It elevates the discussion around education about what are you trying to do and how do you get there. My hope is this will change the conversation, give us something more meaty than "what is the next two years like?" The QEM has helped the state have a better conversation about K-12 than we did in the first place.

George: One of the reasons I like 40/40/20 is it gives us something to get our juices going. It is far enough out there that we don't have to worry about not achieving it right away but it is close enough that we can conceive it whereas 2050 is beyond the lifetime of many people in the room. We have gotten more traction with that goal than with anything else in the last several years.

Dick: One of the problems we may create is if this is presented as a straight line. We may want to present this as an escalating curve. The front end may cost more and produce less results but as we move up it curves up toward the goal. We may have to package what we say in this way. If it were successful, we may have achieved 90% of the goal 5 years out, but we may only get 10% of the goal in the first five years.

Frank: It gets increasingly expensive to get the last bit of the margins.

Margie: Of you have some investments you want to make and the payout period is in the latter stages of implementation, you have to have some early indicators, otherwise the political process makes it untenable to hang on to the proposal.

Ed: Part of what we may have to lay out is not just the big picture but what are the best strategic investments to make at any one point in time because you cannot always count on the resources you need being there. If you have \$3 million, what should you do first? Here's a prioritized list of things that need to happen at this point in time if we can't have every piece we want.

Roger: I really do believe 40/40/20 has been a useful challenge. I would like to see us own it for real rather than just as a number. Engage leaders of the economy and workforce, what does it take to make appropriate connections.

Ed: It needs to emerge from a broad-based dialogue. We have to make sure everyone is on board.

Ryan: We are about to go out and start pushing this big time.

Gretchen: Another big advantage is it involves the entire education continuum; nobody is left out of the conversation. We can look at the K-12 demand; they have to get to a 100% graduation rate. Getting that leak out of the pipeline, we have to think about K-12 as well as community colleges, privates, publics, etc. It takes the sheer number competition away from OUS. How can we best get to 40/40/20 what are the right steps to take now in the entire continuum? It's a huge cultural shift for the legislature.

Dick: Does that suggest global budgeting for education?

Ryan: I think that's coming.

Roger: We have a data group formed. Susan Weeks and Krissa Caldwell will lead it. It is about more than just PSE. Questions raised: who has the best picture of what the economy is going to look like in 2025? There is a growing list of anecdotal gaps (or leaks) in the pipeline that could be addressed if we are going to achieve 40/40/20. Those present themselves as an opportunity to make an early difference of a targeted kind. We should make that a discrete activity, engaging stakeholders and the general public. Then in the commission create the decision rules by which those can be prioritized. What are the best practices for addressing the gaps?

Richard Schwarz addressed the work of the Faculty and Program Quality subcommittee.

Richard: In the draft report there was a small section regarding Faculty and Program Quality. We have had some difficulty getting the subcommittee together and getting the data that we requested back in April. We are still light on data from OUS and not all of the community colleges have reported. The report contains samples of the data we have collected so far. One thing that we wanted -- if you look at the potential first year recommendations -- we took out references to "part-time" to avoid confusion with the vocabulary. One charge is to come up with a uniform definition, and if we talk about one term, we are focusing on provincial terms. "Less than full time" covers the full gamut of faculty/instructors in the CC/OUS systems; we tried to make that reference uniform and it was incorporated in the way we described the questions. We don't have a complete dataset, so it is difficult to make any reasoned inferences from them, but we provided snapshots to show what data we are collecting. It is premature to decide what it means; we are still looking for additional literature that might help on the issue of quality. One thing we haven't thought about, we are looking in general for studies, but one of the lynchpins is access. If we think of access as an element of student success, we may want to widen the net that we are throwing to look for literature on elements that contribute to success from the student's perspective as well.

Larry asked for clarification about certain aspects of the data.

Ed noted that the key concern is that there is a systematic and substantial decline in the percentage of FTEs taught by full time faculty.

George asked about the definitions of part-time faculty. Dick responded that in many cases they are collective bargaining definitions, such as these people are eligible for benefits.

Cam asked if the colleges could receive copies of the data compilation thus far. Brian replied that Paul Schroeder has the document and has made it available to interested colleges.

Gretchen addressed her concerns about the recommendations pertaining to part-time faculty: It is still not clear to me the basis for recommendations 3 and 4. What is it that we know that says we need more money going into instructor development? I don't see anything about academic advising. We are not sure that our definitions are the same, I can understand recommendation 1 so we can collect some data on a consistent basis. Why would we recommend as a commission that we would provide funding for a comprehensive study for this, we have no evidence that would suggest that this is good, bad or indifferent, why do we need a study and why should we be doing it? Clearly this is not making a lot of sense to me.

Dick: On 4, I am remembering that we spent considerable time in an earlier meeting. There is some research on the quality of advising as a factor in student success. Lack of access is often to part time faculty, improving that access regardless of full-time or part time.

Gretchen: I think the advising should come out of this section and be elevated to overall commission recommendations so it takes on some priority. Or we get to a point where we are defining quality education. It has an automatic implication that somehow that is attached to part-time faculty.

Frank asked: Isn't it true that we have found no evidence that tells us there is a difference in outcomes for students whether taught by full-time or part-time faculty? Brian replied that the literature is weak and inconclusive on this topic.

Margie: One of the questions we haven't faced is there are voices in the legislature who want to mandate certain proportions of full-time/part time faculty. We are going to have this committee look at post-secondary quality education. Where does the commission want to go forward from there? What are the retention and completion experiences at those institutions?

Cam: I share Gretchen's concern. You are choosing those because you think they are valued, but there may not be causality. I could anecdotally explain a lot of the difference between colleges with different reliance on part-time faculty. If you have a college that has less than 1,000 students, versus one that has five or ten thousand. How many times have you heard Frank say we can't get the people in a technical program to finish because they are hired before they finish?

Dick: I don't want to shoot all this down before we get out of the gate on it; we still need more data and then we can start modeling and try to figure out what it means. One reason for this is there was a lot of discussion that half the people who start in the OUS system are gone ...

George: 50% of the students you are going to lose are lost in the first year.

Dick: Why are they leaving, why are they not successful? If most of the courses are taught by non-full time faculty?

George: They are avenues to explore, but if you look at the institutions that lose the most, they are the smaller institutions where the full time faculty are actually the ones who are doing the teaching. The institutions where a lot of people quit have lots of GTAs.

Ed: My sense is, if I look at the report draft, on page 3 we talk about the recommendations we agreed to in an earlier meeting, and when I go to page 24, we have recommendations including 5 listed there and Gretchen raised real questions about them. The ones you have within that section might be recommendations about questions we would ask or explore to get at the faculty and program quality issue. But we are not there yet you do not have the data or information yet to make those determinations. And it is not critical in a sense since we said in page 3 here are our recommendations for this biennium.

Frank: I would support 1 and 2 and forget 3 and 4. Unless one of the people who is wishing to put something into legislative language that a certain proportion exists, if it's not one of them, we ought to be working with the President and Speaker to refer it to Ways and Means and put it into the back file.

Margie: If we don't approach it in a scholarly way, we may end up with remedies that are not as thorough or evaluative.

Gretchen: What do you want to do? Fund a comprehensive study?

Margie: I think we need to do what makes sense to do.

Ed: There's an issue out there.

George: Let's play with that for a minute; it will come back through the education committees. We looked at the research and no one has figured this out. What do we do? The question before us is: do you want to do a study, which I think given the multiplicity of institutions and institutional strategies is going to be an extremely difficult one to put forward, or do we have another alternative to offer that would be satisfactory to those committee members?

Margie: In the executive branch we ignored this for a long time and then we were required to make changes.

Frank: Is it a union issue due to lower pay and benefits?

Dick: Yes.

George: Is this primarily about benefits or salaries?

Dick: It's all of those. The expansion in the ranks has been on part-time people, and that is done on the cheap because you can hire part-time people with no benefits, different salary levels, the compensation structure is built differently, and it creates demand.

Larry: Part of the issue is I may be a part-time instructor in three different colleges and I don't get any benefits.

Ed: On the other hand you could have a small business owner who is sharp and better than anyone on the permanent staff.

George: My point is what do you do after you have said that, what is the next step? I am fearful of us in Oregon doing a study. This is not an Oregon issue; it is a national issue. I am surprised that no one in the larger states has yet addressed this.

Joe: 425 studies were reviewed by a North Carolina researcher, who found them to be all over the map. There is a University of Washington study that is very comprehensive. You did hit the nail on the head and there is a difference in salary. The more dollars are available the more full time faculty. California came up with the idea of grouping together the institutions and group them together as full time, but they can't fund the cost.

Ed: I would like to punt on this for the next biennium. There is no conclusive research on full time, part time instruction. We have nothing to add to the debate.

Frank: If it affects quality, is there a meta analysis that has looked at the research together?  
Brian explained the problems with meta studies on this topic.

Ryan: This whole conversation that we had for the last 25 minutes I think we should never have again. We will lose the work that is being done. There is a great lead in and all of the supporting documents should be in the first 45 or 60 seconds.

Gretchen: I think we're all trying to be incredibly tactful in saying that there isn't a way to answer the question that has been posed. If I were a legislator concerned about the issue, I would not be satisfied. The report doesn't represent the work that is being done. We need to do a better job of saying we have really researched this and here is the problem. If we want to try to find a quality issue here, we would like to build this into future study. We should be gathering some consistent kinds of data that we have now. Make it sound more credible instead of by assertion. It's to George's point – if we are not going to do a study, expand on that. This is going to come up again when we address capacity, adding part-time people, they can come in and add to capacity. That may bring us back to the other implications.

Roger: Going back to the executive order, there is a very specific request for a consistent definition for three categories of faculty. As for practices, there are abuses of it, declare what they are and treat them. It is very difficult to argue that there is a degree of abuse with people working at multiple colleges.

Ed: A statement that does speak to what the literature is, it has been surveyed, there is no definitive statement that can be made at this point, there are geographical and economic factors that provide information, and there are abuses within systems of mixed faculty use, but at this point we don't have anything to add to that conversation.

Ed: There is a draft of the report, and Roger has put some material together about the quality education model part of the report. We need to rework the material on faculty and program quality. I appreciate hearing from the two committees. On the quality of education goals committee we have not tasked you to do anything else at this point. What are the various measures of quality and can we start sorting among the options that are out there, measures of quality that we could integrate into the study later on? Until we have a charge for that, I think we ought to wait. What I would propose is go back and do some more wordsmithing on the document for the October meeting.

Gretchen: I tend to get lost in this report easily. It says executive summary, but it is not clear when that ends. The next part should be moved to the appendix. It needs to be reorganized with a better executive summary.

**Action Items:**

The Faculty and Program Quality section will be rewritten to provide a survey of the literature and to more thoroughly address the issues of concern to legislators.

The executive summary and report organization will be revamped and concerns mentioned by commission members addressed.