Exploring a New Paradigm for Higher Education

Can a preschool-through-grad school approach change education?

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By Lally Gartel and Robert F. Rich

At the heart of the critical issues facing higher education are the connections within and across pre-school, elementary, secondary and higher education. These connections need to be effectively developed to meet the state's needs in the future. One way to accomplish this is to develop Illinois' P-20 initiative.

P-20 refers to a concept that keeps the entire span of educational institutions in mind when considering or attempting to improve one or more elements of education. The P-20 outlook is predicated on the notion that no single part of education is wholly separate from another, and that educational policy at one level will have consequences for the other levels. Moreover, P-20 includes professional outcomes and work force preparedness as important issues in educational policy. At the core, P-20 councils believe it is important to integrate the linkages between pre-school, elementary, secondary, and higher education. Each component is affected by the others.

Higher education's future depends upon its ability to establish connections with lower levels of education that will help ensure high quality at all levels. This will be enhanced by the development of partnerships between education, government, business, and the not-for-profit sector.

The chapter will outline a brief history of P-20, describe its relevance to Illinois and its system of higher education, analyze the potential roles and forms of a P-20 council, and describe opportunities for partnerships for universities and colleges throughout Illinois.

P-20 and Statewide Education

In the past decade, the notion of a "P-20" or "P-16" council has gathered momentum as a tool for improving educational and employment outcomes from students all the way from pre-school ("P") to college and beyond ("16" or "20"). Since the 1990s, 38 such councils have formed across the country and have attempted, to varying levels of success, to bridge the gap between different levels of education.[1] In this chapter, you will see the terms P-16 and P-20 used somewhat interchangeably, depending on the form of the council in a particular state.

The 38 existing P-16 or P-20 councils vary widely in their formation and size, their powers as policymakers and/or recommenders, and their major goals and accomplishments. North Carolina, Oregon, and Tennessee are the only state P-16 councils that hold administrative authority over other agencies or over executive practices. Extensive research performed by the Educational Commission of the States, Editorial Projects in Education, and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education compares and contrasts these factors in the states' P-20 councils, and *Education Week* in June 2008 published an issue titled "Diplomas Count 2008," acknowledging the growing popularity of P-20 councils in education policy.[2]

Major research agendas in the P-20 arena include graduation and retention rates, assessment of teaching quality and certification, and work force development in secondary and higher education. Identifying and implementing partnerships among groups in the various levels of education is one way that P-20 partnerships improve communication among those levels.

The crux of the P-20 concept's success has been the ability to set and achieve coordinated goals throughout the levels of education. The state of Georgia, often hailed as

[1] "P-16 councils: Structure and Initiative" *Education Week* (Diplomas Count 2008) Vol. 27, Issue 40 http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/40ecs_overview-initiative.h27.pdf.

[2] *Education Week* (Diplomas Count 2008) Vol. 27, Issue 40 http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2008/06/05/index.html.

one of the most innovative and successful purveyors of the notion of P-20 or P-16, has numerous partnerships and coordinators at all levels of education. Each coordinator, partner and subsequent initiative in the Georgia P-16 network is evaluated by the University of Georgia's "P-16 Balanced Score Card" in which matters of funding, implementation and success are addressed directly by one of the major P-16 collaborators.[3] For every initiative, the actors, annual targets and results, points of contact, and methods of measurement are clearly identified. This is made possible by the initial structure and organization of the P-16 initiatives and their goals. In Georgia, the "Double, Double" initiative, which aims to double the number and diversity of teachers prepared by the University of Georgia system by 2010, certified 3,157 teachers in fiscal year 2004 and 4,102 teachers in fiscal year 2005.[4] Another initiative, PRISM (Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics), released statistics in its October 2008 Impact Report that showed schools with P-16-sponsored PRISM programs were outperforming those without PRISM programs and outperforming schools in the state as a whole.[5] Moreover, because of Georgia's well-developed network of research and information gathering for P-16, the PRISM report was able to show progress in closing the achievement gap at PRISM schools as well as which grades benefited most from the program. As a result of these programs and their corresponding research and regular assessment, the state's educators can see the impact on students' academic performance.

In Kentucky, the P-16 council can opt to participate in nationwide initiatives, such as the American Diploma Project, which aim to align curriculum standards across the levels of education.[6] Once in the nationwide collaboration, these councils and partnerships have access to a broad network of strategies, benchmarks, and approaches to curriculum alignment. Initiatives like the American Diploma Project further illustrate the potential reach of the P-20 idea – from the national to the local level, partnerships among groups foster access to information as well as transparency about goals.

Because so many P-16 and P-20 councils across the United States were created in the last few years, it is difficult to pinpoint overarching trends in implementation and success. Nevertheless, signs of success are evident even in states with recently created councils. For instance in Texas, which founded its council in 2003, reports to the legislature and research about high school graduation, retention and college attendance show steady increases in the participation of higher education in the state.[7] Though it is not clear that P-16 councils are responsible for increases such as these, the councils do foster attention to education in public policy.

Minnesota is another good example of a state with a recently formed P-16 council that has developed a strong blueprint for performance. The council has a mission to improve education quality and work force readiness, readily accessible informative reports, and features major reports from its smaller working groups. As an example, the "Postsecondary and Workforce Science Readiness Working Group" focused on work force readiness for the scientific fields in Minnesota schools.[8] This report was specialized, and gave highly focused recommendations about science standards in Minnesota high schools.

In Rhode Island, a 10-member P-16 council did the work of centralizing knowledge about existing programs and their effectiveness. Though many higher education institutions had existing dual-enrollment and other programs with school districts and high schools, policymakers and stakeholders in education did not know or communicate about them. The P-16 council, as one of its first activities, gathered information and

[3] "2008 Balanced Scorecard" Department of P-16 Initiatives, Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia http://www.usg. edu/p16/resources/PDFs/P-16_Balanced_Score_Card.pdf (November 5, 2007).

[4] Double the Number and Double the Diversity of Teachers Prepared by the University System of Georgia http://www.usg.edu/p16/initiatives/doubledouble.phtml.

[5] http://www.gaprism.org/presentations/reports/2008/impact_report1008.pdf.

[6] ADP Benchmarks *American Diploma Project* http://www.achieve.org/ADPBenchmarks (2008).

[7] P-16 College Readiness and Success Strategic Action Plan Implementation Report A Report to the 80th Texas Legislature from the Commissioner of Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board December 2006.

[8] Report of the Postsecondary and Workforce Science Readiness Working Group *Minnesota P-16 Education Partnership* (August 1, 2008) http://mnp16.org/reports/P16ScienceReadinessWorkingGroupReportfinal08-08.rtf.

data about the programs in order to understand their effectiveness and potential for P-16 success.[9] Moreover, the Rhode Island P-16 council took concrete steps to increase enrollment in higher education by bringing college-level courses ("Pathways to College") to at-risk high schools across Rhode Island, giving high-risk students college credits and encouraging them to enroll in institutions of higher education.[10]

A successful P-16 program in Virginia did extensive research into college readiness and work force readiness standards in a series of reports, quantitative and qualitative studies, and interviews with stakeholders, university faculty, and business leaders. To implement the findings of this research, Virginia's council opted to participate in national programs that set benchmark standards for high school matriculation and retention. Moreover, Virginia's P-16 council set up pilot programs in schools to retain ninth graders, because research shows this is the grade where students have the highest chance of leaving school. In addition to these programs, the council piloted the Commonwealth Scholars Initiative, which enrolled high-performing Virginia students in competitive courses, had a focus on technical work force readiness standards, and leveraged support and funding by using the coordinated resources available to the P-16. This program graduated more students with more skills in just one year. As a result of this program, Virginia was asked to present its findings to the U.S. Department of Education.[11]

Virginia's success relied on several factors. Most importantly, the coordination and research done by the council paved the way for success in implementation. Secondly, Virginia's attention to existing national standards and best practices ensured that its attempts to improve education from kindergarten to college were measured and deemed to be successful by the educational and business communities.

Other states' experiences with P-20 can help elucidate the potential for progress as well as potential pitfalls. Though Illinois differs from the aforementioned states in many key ways, including the structure of K-12 administration and funding and the sheer number of students attending the state's schools, it is nevertheless important to understand lessons from P-20 as well as Illinois' particular needs.

P-20 and Illinois

In Illinois, a P-16 Partnership was active beginning in 2000-2001, but legislation approved in 2007 contains the charter for a new Illinois P-20 Council. The legislation explicitly outlines the expectations and goals of the council.

The General Assembly finds that preparing Illinoisans for success in school and the workplace requires a continuum of quality education from preschool through graduate school. This State needs a framework to guide education policy and integrate education at every level. A statewide coordinating council to study and make recommendations concerning education at all levels can avoid fragmentation of policies, promote improved teaching and learning, and continue to cultivate and demonstrate strong accountability and efficiency. Establishing an Illinois P-20 Council will develop a statewide agenda that will move the State towards the common goals of improving academic achievement, increasing college access and success, improving use of existing data and measurements, developing improved accountability, promoting lifelong learning, easing the transition to college, and reducing remediation. A pre-kindergarten through grade 20 agenda will strengthen this State's economic competitiveness by producing a highly-skilled workforce. In addition, lifelong learning plans will enhance this State's ability to leverage funding.[12]

Additionally, the legislation outlines the proposed membership of the P-20 council. The council is expected to have 36 mem-

[9] "Rhode Island Governor Drives Agenda, Raising Questions About Sustainability" By Scott J. Cech *Education Week* (Diplomas Count 2008) Vol. 27, Issue 40 http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/06/05/40rhodeisland.h27.html.

[10] Rhode Island Governor Drives Agenda, Raising Questions About Sustainability By Scott J. Cech (June 5, 2008) http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/06/05/40rhodeisland.h27.html?tmp=1560935052.

[11] Report to the Governor and General Assembly Virginia's P-16 Education Council October 2007 http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/P-16Council/index.cfm.

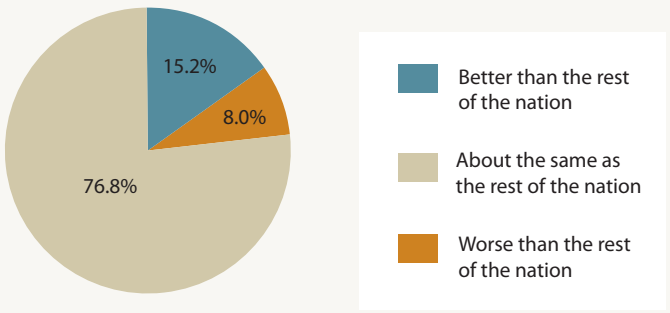
[12] Public Act 095-0626, HB1648 (Enrolled LRB095 08340 NHT 31869 b) AN ACT concerning education. http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/Academic%20Affairs/P20/HB1648.pdf.

bers, ranging from the governor (or his representative) to civic, local, and political leaders.

The importance for P-20 in the consideration of higher education and higher education policy in Illinois is undeniable. In June 2008, the Institute of Government and Public Affairs, in conjunction with the College of Education and the College of Media at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, held a Higher Education Summit in Chicago. At the summit, leaders from higher education and policymaking discussed the challenges, needs and strengths of Illinois higher education. Also, a higher education survey, released at the summit, showed that Illinoisans believe the quality, price, or accessibility of an Illinois education is "good, but not great."[13] The results also indicated that Illinois higher education can benefit from a public commitment to increasing funding, accessibility, affordability, and quality.

Graduation rates in Illinois are above the national average and ranked in approximately the top third of all states at 76.7 percent in 2005.[14] In 2007, the Illinois Board of Education Reports an 85.5 percent graduation rate.[15]

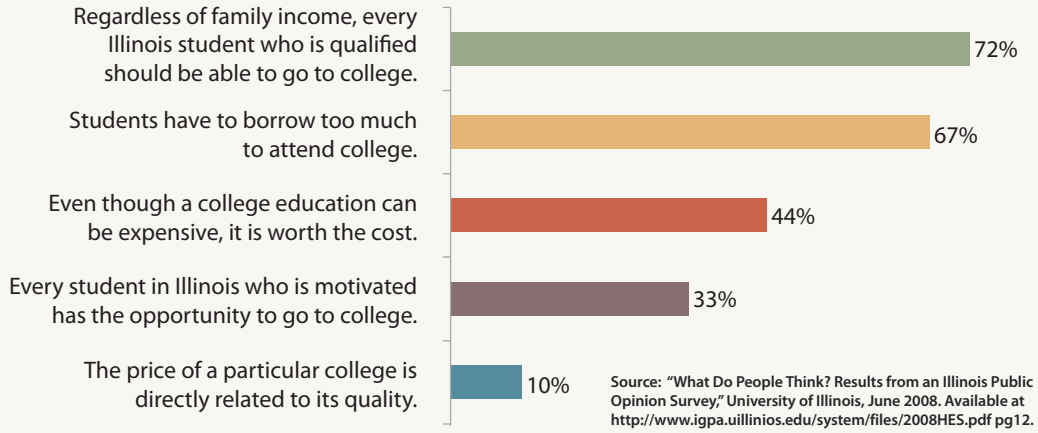
Figure 1
Illinois Residents' Beliefs About the Quality of Higher Education in Illinois



Source: "What Do People Think? Results from an Illinois Public Opinion Survey," University of Illinois, June 2008. Available at http://www.igpa.uillinios.edu/system/files/2008HES.pdf pg 7.

However, Illinois does not have defined college and work readiness standards, which means it is not clear that students' transition from high school to college and the professional world is adequate. Moreover, because graduation standards vary from state to state, comparing Illinois students' performance on measures of literacy and math competence in comparison with other states also is useful. On these measures, it seems that Illinois is about at the national average.[16] One way a P-20 council can contribute to educational quality and better outcomes is by helping to establish standards for and informed by *all* the levels of education, improving and integrating educational and professional success.

Figure 2
Illinois Residents' Beliefs About the Costs of an Illinois College Education



Source: "What Do People Think? Results from an Illinois Public Opinion Survey," University of Illinois, June 2008. Available at http://www.igpa.uillinios.edu/system/files/2008HES.pdf pg12.

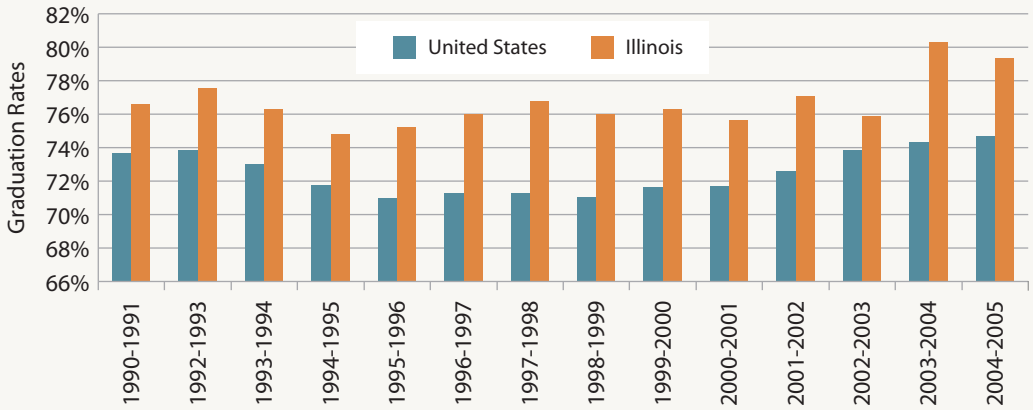
[13] 2008 Higher Education Summit http://www.igpa.uillinois.edu/library/2008-higher-education-summit.

[14] "School to College: Can State P-16 Councils Ease the Transition?" (Illinois Edition) *Education Week* (Diplomas Count 2008) Vol. 27, Issue 40 http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/40sgb.il.h27.pdf.

[15] 2007 Illinois State Report Card (Illinois State Board of Education) http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getReport.aspx?year=2007&code=2007StateReport_E.pdf.

[16] *Illinois State Profile (Nation's Report Card)* National Center for Education Statistics http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/profile.asp.

Figure 3
Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates for US and Illinois, 1990-91 through 2004-05



Note: The averaged freshman graduation rate provides an estimate of the percentage of students who receive a regular diploma within 4 years of entering ninth grade. The rate uses aggregate student enrollment data to estimate the size of an incoming freshman class and aggregate counts of the number of diplomas awarded 4 years later.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 1986-87 through 2005-06; and The Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate for Public High Schools From the Common Core of Data: School Years 2002-03 and 2003-04. (This table was prepared June 2007.)

Additionally, P-20 would be capable of addressing disparities in access and quality of education across the state. Because the focus of P-20 is systematic attention to problems at all levels of education, councils can tackle such issues as disparities in teacher quality, educational funding and facilities, and other inequitable trends to perhaps find solutions.[17] The experience in other states, especially California and Georgia which have special focus and results in their P-16 programs on closing the achievement gap between students of different backgrounds, provides evidence that programs specifically targeted to achieve improvements in math, science, reading, and teacher preparedness show tangible benefits for education in the state.

P-20 Membership

Though P-20 councils are not directly responsible for the establishment of partnerships between institutions of higher education and K-12 schools or business establishments, they provide a forum for stakeholders to set the groundwork for potential partnerships. The membership structure of a P-20 council, therefore, contributes significantly to the successful establishment of partnerships among different levels of education. Furthermore, the specific members are, in the long run, able to foster partnerships and programs between institutions that are not necessarily directly mediated by the council.

The Illinois P-20 council is composed to provide as many possible interactions among stakeholders in education as possible. The inclusion of legislative, business, educational (all levels), parental, and student interests in the P-20 framework increases the connections among leaders and participants in education. Membership in councils nationwide varies; while some states have as few as five members, others have as many as 52.[18] While Georgia's older and successful P-20 council has only seven members, Arizona's newer but nationally recognized council has 36.[19] Membership is important because of the viewpoints, perspectives, and sources of knowledge it brings to the policy-making agenda.

Because Illinois' P-20 council includes prominent agenda-setters and policy makers such as the governor, or his/her representative, as well as representatives and appointees from the legislature, it will be able to inform government of important trends and directions for educational policy

[17] "A 2020 Vision for a University of Illinois Initiative: P-16 and Beyond" *Report of the University of Illinois Task Force on P-16 Education* (December 5, 2000) http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/p16/P-16-Report.html#8.

[18] *StateNotes: P-16/P-20 Councils* Education Commission of the States (2008) http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=910.

[19] *StateNotes: P-16/P-20 Councils* Education Commission of the States (2008) http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=910.

and avoid being marginalized. Fundamental educational policy changes emerge from the work, recommendations and programs piloted by the P-20 council only with the attention and participation of those charged with improving educational policy at the legislative and executive levels.

P-20 Goals

Setting well-defined goals is crucial to the success of a P-20 council. Regular meetings, when successful, develop methods to evaluate past initiatives and set very specific goals for future educational attainment. In Arizona, the governor's P-20 council is separated into nine different committees, all of which preside over a particular part of the equation. For example, the Higher Education Ad Hoc Committee has an explicitly stated purpose: "To increase the number of post-secondary degrees in Arizona."[20] This committee has released a targeted set of recommendations for policy actors. Other committees also have implemented their specific goals, such as beginning a public awareness campaign dedicated to popularizing the notion of education alignment across levels and curricula.

In California, the P-16 council has set one overarching goal for the next three years with sub-goals and progress reports released regularly. This goal is "closing the achievement gap," and the council set out a plan to reach specific goals for reducing achievement differences among groups within three years. For every goal in every phase of the project, there are specific "progress indicators" and "target dates" listed. One example of this project's use of clear, specific, and functional goal-setting is during "Phase 2," when the group plans to review test scores and compare them to the targets the group itself has set for closing the achievement gap.[21] Specific and easily definable and testable goals such as this one work to keep P-20 councils on track and keep their programs and research useful and effective.[22] In its January 2008 "Closing the Achievement Gap" report, California's P-16 council proposed specific strategies, such as mandating high-speed Internet access in all schools, to supplement the explicitly educational goals of setting and applying rigorous academic standards.[23] Paying attention to issues of practical access to educational tools and their role in educational attainment is one way that P-20 councils can bring together concerns from all relevant sources.

Particularly in states with relatively new P-20 councils like Minnesota, Arizona, and Missouri, gathering information on resources and seeing avenues for the application of these resources is crucial to the ultimate success of the council's work. Missouri's P-20 council (founded in 2006) addressed immediate concerns by gathering and understanding national benchmarks and applying for funding in order to instantiate national programs, such as a national longitudinal data-sharing program from the National Governor's Association. Missouri also founded a statewide program called "Workforce 2025," which set concrete goals for work force development through education.[24] Though it is not clear how successful the newer councils' initiatives will be, the growing use of the P-20 approach promises to provide a wealth of interstate knowledge about what does and does not work for education. Moreover, the use of specific programs, goals, and benchmarks proved to be successful strategies in Georgia, Rhode Island, and Virginia, where these were the first steps in developing fruitful educational partnerships.

In Illinois, the work of past P-16 initiatives should be crucial to goal-setting in the new P-20 council. Illinois educational goals can be set by looking at important data about the problems in Illinois education; the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), Community College Board (CCB) and events like the Higher Education Summit provide ample evidence and opportunity

[20] Janet Napolitano: Governor of Arizona – P-20 Council Purposes and Initiatives (June 2008) http://www.governor.state.az.us/p20/Committees.asp.

[21] "State Superintendent of Public Instruction's P-16 Council Closing the Achievement Gap" Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction California Department of Education (2007) http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/pc/documents/yr073yrplan.doc.

[22] *P-16 Council* California Department of Education (September 17, 2008) http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/pc/.

[23] "Closing the Achievement Gap: Report of Superintendant Jack O'Connell's California P-16 Council" January 2008 http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/pc/documents/yr08ctagrpt0122.pdf.

[24] "Missouri P-16 Council 2007 Annual Report" http://www.p20.mo.gov/documents/2007P20AnnualReportelectronic.pdf.

for setting substantive goals for higher education improvement in the state. For example, a common goal among P-20 councils is increasing graduation and retention rates among high school students, coupled with a commitment to increases in college attendance and work force readiness. Another is improving teacher quality. In Illinois, graduation rates are above national averages, but there are opportunities to develop goals involving college readiness and attendance because Illinois students are not generally above average on tests of academic performance across age groups.[25]

To ensure that goals are achievable, however, it is important to understand how to adequately *measure* standards such as college readiness. Also, it is important to understand the implications of measures employed by the federal government to assess learning, to measure and be attentive to such indicators regularly, and to set clear and manageable goals to review. Because of the centrality of this sort of research, it is another major part of P-20 success.

Educational Research

Educational research is fundamentally important to success in P-20 because of the importance of having access to and understanding the outcomes and implications of current and future policies. Although many P-20 organizations are relatively new, there is both current partnership information and auxiliary research that would be very beneficial to the work of a P-20 council. The law that created the Illinois P-20 council requires that the Illinois Educational Research Council provide assistance. This research currently includes data about the distribution of teachers in Illinois, teacher attrition and quality, and longitudinal studies on the outcomes of Illinois high school students, as well as other research relevant to P-20 policy making. It is possible that the Educational Research Council could provide research on the specific needs and concerns of Illinois' P-20 council as they arose.

In December 2000, the University of Illinois Task Force on P-16 Education released a report titled "A 2020 Vision for a University of Illinois Initiative: P-16 and Beyond."[26] With various faculty and staff from all three campuses of the university, the task force gathered evidence and examples from P-16 councils and presented visions for the ways in which the university might help implement a P-16 initiative. Though the policy landscape has changed since 2000, the task force's attention to Illinois' existing programs and continued potential are invaluable for any contemporary investigation into P-20's potential in Illinois, especially with regard to higher education. This report and others like it contain general research about P-20, but institutions of higher education also have access to issue-specific research done by faculty.

Research from the Higher Education Summit is clear about Illinois citizens' concerns about higher education in the state. They are worried that a college education in Illinois is overpriced and not especially unique. This sort of research provides an excellent context for P-20 work because it can inform both the goal-setting and execution for the council if it were to pursue a public relations campaign. This might be an important option in the state, because survey results have shown that Illinois families overestimate the costs of higher education. With any goal that a P-20 council sets, the corresponding educational research and expertise is important to the realistic and efficient attainment of objectives.

Higher Education and P-20

One of the ways to achieve important educational changes might be to use Illinois' recent adoption of a P-20 council to increase the ties between higher education and K-12 education, making both systems accountable to and interested in one another. In this regard, it is important to look to historical partnerships among Illinois

[25] *Illinois State Profile (Nation's Report Card)* National Center for Education Statistics http://nces.ed.gov/nations reportcard/states/profile.asp.

[26] "A 2020 Vision for a University of Illinois Initiative: P-16 and Beyond" *Report of the University of Illinois Task Force on P-16 Education* (December 5, 2000) http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/p16/P-16-Report.html.

universities and colleges and K-12 systems to assess the possibility of using these partnerships for a successful P-20 campaign. In October 2000, the ISBE, IBHE, and ICCB issued a progress report on P-16 partnerships among the organizations and within the state as a whole. The conclusion of that report said there were ample opportunities for growth and progress in the P-16 frameworks in Illinois.[27] Arguably, this remains true to this day, when a P-20 council has become legally mandated.

As such, examining the routes and partnerships established by the ISBE, IBHE, and ICCB during that time can yield extremely useful goals at the outset of the P-20 council's work. Examples of partnership potential mentioned in 2004 included college and university involvement in teacher and educational leadership preparation, as well as goals to increase the use of technology in community colleges and among P-16 collaborators.

Illinois universities have had direct partnerships and contact with K-12 schools in addition to local and national business and professional interests. Northern Illinois University's colleges established several partnerships with specific high schools in their area, especially in the areas of science, technology and mathematics education.[28] NIU's involvement in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education program involved several crucial components of successful P-20 partnerships for higher education. The STEM program has clearly defined goals within the scope of "Keeping Illinois Competitive," involving the alignment of educational goals in science and math education with those necessary for work force success in the 21st century.[29] NIU's involvement in curriculum alignment and teacher preparation spans several sorts of activities and partnerships, but the university has been heavily invested in partnerships with K-12 education[30] as well as coordination with the private sector and business interests to understand the professional needs of the contemporary work force.[31]

NIU's work provides one example of P-20 partnerships for higher education. The University of Illinois also has existing frameworks in its various outreach and curriculum-development programs that could be readily applied to P-20 initiatives and partnerships. In its 2000 report, the P-16 Task Force divided more than 250 P-16-related activities into five categories: research and development, policy formation and implementation, university / school collaborations, teacher and administrator education, and the exploration of new technologies.[32] Like eight years ago, these initiatives and partnerships are not necessarily aware of each other, and there is no central program or coordinator that can help determine the scope of the university's involvement in P-16. One benefit of the university's attention to upcoming P-20 council's work could be a reinvigoration of those existing programs.

Lessons, Conclusions, Recommendations

The preceding sections of this chapter discussed the history, components, structure and value of a "P-20" approach to education. They also situated P-20 as both a recurring and freshly viable venue for educational reform for Illinois in the coming years. In particular, the role of higher education in the P-20 equation is heavily highlighted in this discussion. This focus reflects the immense role higher education and the resources associated with institutions of higher learning can play in assessing educational success and establishing the standards necessary for Illinois students to succeed in the work force and the economy.

One major approach to higher education's involvement in P-20 is the establishment of partnerships – with business, high schools and school districts, and with other colleges and universities. In states like Virginia, Georgia, and Arizona, the

[27] Illinois P-16 collaborative *Illinois Educator* (2004, University of Illinois) http://www.illinoiseducator.illinois.edu/P16_in_illinois.html.

[28] "NIU increases efforts to boost P-20 performance in science, technology, engineering and math Pati Sievert named STEM Outreach coordinator" (July 30, 2008) http://www.niu.edu/PubAffairs/RELEASES/2008/july/stem.shtml.

[29] Illinois Status Report: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Education (Aligning STEM Education to 21st Century Knowledge and Skills) (2006) http://www.keepingillinoiscompetitive.niu.edu/ilstem/align.shtml.

[30] Project Lead the Way (2007-2008) http://www.pltw.org/index.cfm.

[31] NIU P-20: Partnerships http://www.p20.niu.edu/P20/partnerships.shtml.

[32] "A 2020 Vision for a University of Illinois Initiative: P-16 and Beyond" *Report of the University of Illinois Task Force on P-16 Education* (December 5, 2000) http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/p16/P-16-Report.html.

All in all, higher education has much to contribute to the P-20 initiative, but also much to gain.

participation of faculty and business leaders in setting standards for educational achievement have shown to be possible and effective, especially with respect to math and science education. Moreover, colleges of education in Georgia have shown that setting discrete goals in the training and graduation of new and diverse teachers is one major way that universities are able to contribute to educational achievement. Partnerships have immense potential to create a work-ready Illinois population, align high school and elementary school standards with the demands of college education and employment competitiveness, and provide opportunities for community college and other students to obtain bachelor's and graduate degrees in their fields.

Once the Illinois P-20 council begins its work, one of its main goals should be to make sure it is able to take advantage of existing programs that have a relationship to P-20 work. These include the Illinois Board of Higher Education's school leader preparation programs, teacher collaborative programs, and the multitude of programs and partnerships among institutions of higher education, businesses, and K-12 schools. The ability to harness this information will give the P-20 council concrete goals and plans which, with diligence and attention, can translate into measurable educational improvement. As work in California, Rhode Island, Virginia, Arizona, and virtually every other state with a P-20 council has shown, proper access to information and research is the only way to begin setting realistic goals for improvement in the future. Closing the gap in math and science education in Georgia required knowing proper standards for education, how to train teachers capable of educating students on these matters, and being able to evaluate the success of enacted policy.

If the role of P-20 is to bridge the gap between the various levels of oversight, legislation and management of education, then it must also have the membership to represent the knowledge and complexity of these various sectors. Illinois' legislation lays out a specific list of members that contains stakeholders from many important Illinois groups. Joined with the ability to solicit other experts' opinions and gather research from the Illinois Educational Research Council and participating institutions of higher education, P-20 membership in Illinois can reflect a diversity and strength in the face of educational challenges.

Access and the ability to interpret research is the key feature of P-20 success because it is one of the few ways to understand whether P-20 initiatives are improving educational outcomes or providing substantive benefit to students and families in Illinois. As mentioned, the Illinois Educational Research Council and universities and colleges in the state can provide expertise and guidance during the evaluations of P-20 programs.

Ultimately, the interest and important benefit of a P-20 agenda is its ability to apply a systemic and broad approach to education issues in the state of Illinois. By building on P-16 work done in the past both in the state and across the U.S., the council should be able to craft an approach to collaborative educational efforts and incorporate plans among industry, business, higher education, and K-12 systems to provide quality education to Illinois residents at all levels.

It is important, however, that the Illinois P-20 council avoids the shortcoming and potential weaknesses of past P-20 endeavors. Though most P-20 councils have been very successful at defining their role in the educational system, it is another matter entirely whether or not the council is effective. This chapter outlines the ways in which P-20 councils can be effective vehicles for educational improvement, but it is important to note that they can have weaknesses, as well. Many P-20 councils, old

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and new, cannot point directly to much progress beyond the gathering of information. Examples include numerous P-16 and P-20 councils that do not have dedicated employees, do not meet regularly, and do not set concrete goals. Only 18 of the nation's 38 P-16 or P-20 councils have established formal performance goals that can be annually measured, and only 21 have dedicated staff.[33] As a result, a council can end up being little more than a scheduler for meetings. This major weakness can be avoided by securing dedicated funding, staffing, membership, and goals which are continuously re-evaluated for success.

A P-20 council will be able to address the overarching issues that influence the work of colleges and universities. With the understanding and improvement of K-12 educational standards, future students of higher education will be better prepared to deal with the specific challenges of obtaining undergraduate and graduate degrees, decreasing the need for remedial education and increasing coordination between high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities. With participation of business leaders, institutions of higher education will have access to the standards that would make their students more competitive upon graduation. All in all, higher education has much to contribute to the P-20 initiative, but also much to gain. The research, collaboration, and improvement in educational quality and attainment that can result from coordinated efforts across *all* the educational sectors will benefit not only the students of these institutions, but also the institutions themselves and ultimately the state of Illinois as a nexus for business and investment.

[33] "State Councils Vary in Form and Focus" By Amy M. Hightower Education Week: Diplomas Count 2008 June 5, 2008 http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/06/05/40ecs_overview.h27.html.