

**SEVENTH ANNUAL PRESIDENTS' FORUM**  
**OF EXCELSIOR COLLEGE**

The Presidents' Forum met on October 12, 2010, in the Hall of Flags of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 1615 H Street, NW, Washington, DC. The meeting, "Time for an Assessment," focused on the removal of barriers to the provision of cross-state-border online learning and the validation of quality online higher education programs.

**PARTICIPANTS**

Mary Adams, American Sentinel University  
Melanie Anderson, Educational Testing Service  
Margarite Beardsley, New Jersey Commission on Higher Education  
Julie Bell, National Conference of State Legislatures  
Jennifer Blum, Drinker Biddle & Reath, LLP  
Gary Bonvillian, Thomas University  
Wallace Boston, American Public University System - American Military University  
Rebecca Campoverde, Kaplan, Inc.  
John Carreon, Kaplan Higher Education  
Cheryl Casper, Educational Testing Service  
Bruce Chaloux, Southern Regional Education Board  
Bill Clements, Norwich University  
Adrienne Colby, Deutsche Bank  
Byron Connell, State Education Department  
Kevin Corcoran, Lumina Foundation  
Shane DeGarmo, Ohio Board of Regents  
Laura Devaney, eSchool Media  
David Dies, National Association of State Administrators & Supervisors of Private Schools  
Cradly deGolian, The Council of State Governments  
Kathryn Dodge, New Hampshire Postsecondary Education Commission  
Judith Eaton, Council for Higher Education Accreditation  
Gordon Freedman, Blackboard Inc.  
Susan Freedman, FreedNet Consulting  
Richard Garrett, Eduventures, LLC  
Kay Gilcher, Office of Postsecondary Education  
Pam Goins, The Council of State Governments  
Michael Goldstein, Dow Lohnes PLLC  
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Mark Griesbaum, TCS Education Systems - TCS Online  
Alison Griffin, HCM Strategists  
Grace Hall, The Quality Matters Program  
Hugh Hammett, Empire State College  
Michael Horowitz, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology - TCS Education System  
Lily Hsu, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences  
Lane Huber, Bismarck State College  
Larry Isaak, Capella University  
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Sally Johnston, WCET  
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Jonathan Kaplan, Walden University  
Jacqueline King, American Council on Education  
Russell Kitchner, American Public University System  
Holly Kuzmich, Margaret Spellings and Company  
Michael Lambert, Distance Education and Training Council  
Bill Lankenau  
Jennifer Lerner, Northern Virginia Community College  
Ron Legon, The Quality Matters Program  
Charles Lenth, State Higher Education Executive Officers  
Evelyn Levino, Franklin University  
Dennis Littky, Big Picture Learning/College Unbound  
Stanley Litow, IBM  
David Longanecker, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education  
Bernard Luskin, Touro University Worldwide  
Geri Malandra, Kaplan University  
Kent Malwitz, UMBC Training Centers  
Angela Matarozzo-Lau, Academy One, Inc.  
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Pamela Tate, Council for Adult & Experiential Learning  
Melissa Thompson, American Public University System  
Sandra Thompson, Florida Memorial University  
Sharyl Thompson, Capella University  
Alan Tripp, Inside Track  
Kamelia Valkova, Eduventures  
Marcia Watson, University of Maryland University College  
Scott Young, Laureate Education/Walden University  
Katherine Zatz, American Public University System

## WELCOME

Paul Shiffman, assistant vice president for strategic and governmental relations, Excelsior College, and program director for the Presidents' Forum, welcomed the participants to the Seventh Forum, which he described as a small coalition to advance online and continuous learning and address barriers to its quality. John Ebersole, President of Excelsior College, then introduced the keynote speaker, Margaret Spellings, U.S. Secretary of Education from 2005 to 2009, as someone he admires. Although she is perhaps best known as the principal architect of No Child Left Behind, he said, "we know her as a leader in the reform of higher education" and an advocate for higher education in all its forms. With her emphasis on access, affordability, and accountability, in her term as Secretary of Education, she "turned attention from details and numbers to outcomes."

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS: "ONLINE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CATCHING UP TO OUR STUDENTS—AND THE FUTURE"

After thanking Dr. Ebersole for the initiatives of the Presidents' Forum and its perseverance, Dr. Spellings outlined her concerns related to the changing face of higher education, the need for high-quality information, and what Congress and others need to be doing. "The walls of academia are crumbling," she said. Globally 15% of higher education is already online. The challenge for higher education is to keep up technologically. Young people, who are being

raised with technology, are demanding customized educational option. The Commission on the Future of Higher Education offered “bold ideas for access, affordability, and accountability,” but Congress embraced the status quo. The U.S. has now fallen to twelfth place globally in higher education.

A related concern is that higher-income students are eight times more likely to get a bachelor’s degree within four years. However, MIT, Stanford, and other schools are offering content online free. This will help ensure that massification happens.

Changing policies is hard, if not impossible. All 50 states produce data, but it is not well aggregated. The data on online experience is encouraging: a third of faculty has taught online, and the outcomes have been reasonable. But there needs to be more capacity to meet the diversity of needs. And there are calls for better completion rates and concerns about quality and price. Considering that the knee-jerk reaction of Congress is to regulate and legislate, “external validation of our work” is necessary.

Dr. Spellings encouraged the Presidents’ Forum to continue to be proactive, as it has been with Transparency by Design. Employees, among others, have much to gain by maximizing the value of their education to employers. Again there is a need for more data.

“Innovation is not the strong suit of government,” she pointed out. As Secretary of Education she was unable to get on Facebook because a 1984 administrative rule forbade access to policymakers through technology: “Policymakers are behind the public. We must clearly communicate the challenges and support what we are doing with good data.” Otherwise there are few incentives for Congress to change; its members were educated in a highly traditional way. So “data is the currency we need to support policy change.”

One point that must be made, Dr. Spellings said, is that in education “what matters is what you know, not how long you stay.” In closing she noted that “pioneers need to stick together,” and invited the thoughts and views of her listeners.

**In response to a question** about how the “gainful employment” provision came out of the department (“it’s really going back to 1965 legislation”), she responded that “there are lots of theories,” and that the situation is complicated because “politically, the debt burden is the hook now.” Again, better data is needed.

**One comment from the floor** was that “People are not being trained for the jobs available.” In southern California, a number of institutions “would love to create learning pathways but can’t find them.” It could be possible to restructure through retraining.

**Gordon Freedman** suggested it might be useful to have a group working on technology and higher education. Dr. Spellings saw a role for the Presidents’ Forum and community colleges because “we need interested parties to validate—you’re in trouble when K-12 is far ahead of you.”

**Question:** How would data collection connect with accreditation? Dr. Spellings believes that “we will never be able to transfer the accreditation system to outcomes.” Accreditation is “too diffused.” It would be good to create a consortium to work with the data.

**Question:** How do we connect jobs and employees physically? There are lots of green jobs in Colorado, for instance. The questioner commented that “there is lots of public policymaking related to our work—we need more influence” which means being more engaged with more information. Another participant commented that the community colleges are planning a summit on innovation in higher education, one problem being that “staffers don’t have time to learn what’s going on.”

In closing the session, **Dr. Ebersole** noted that “coordination has been missing.”

#### APPRECIATION FOR SPONSORS

Before the program moved forward, Dr. Shiffman took the opportunity to thank the organizations sponsoring the program:

- The Lumina Foundation for Education, which is committed to increasing the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60% by 2025
- Blackboard Inc., which works with more than 5,000 institutions and millions of users to increase the impact of education by transforming the experience of education
- The Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW), the nonprofit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which promotes rigorous educational standards and effective job training, and the systems needed to preserve the strength of America’s greatest economic resource, its workforce
- The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA), which supports distance learning research and development and training and communications at all levels.

#### PANEL: “WHY ARE WE STILL ADDRESSING QUESTIONS ABOUT QUALITY?”

In introducing the moderator, **Julie Porosky Hamlin**, who was instrumental in establishing the Quality Matters organization, **Dr. James Hall** said that the panels had been put together to cover issues similar to those Dr. Spellings had identified in the keynote address, and that Quality Matters, originally a consortium of 20 colleges in Maryland, was putting together “strong evidence of online quality.”

Dr. Hamlin noted that quality has always been in the higher education spotlight, but “never more than now,” when it is considered in terms of student recruitment, college rankings, and retention. She also wondered in passing why quality in online learning must be compared with that of face-to-face teaching: “Not all face-to-face is that good.” In introducing the panel, she noted that **Gordon Freedman**, vice president of strategy for Blackboard, is an exemplar of an online provider; **Ron Legon**, executive director of Quality Matters, is concerned with building evidence of online quality; **Judith S. Eaton**, president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), represents regulation of higher education by higher education; and **Bruce Chaloux**, director of the Electronic Campus of the Southern Regional Education Board (which Dr. Hamlin described as a community of practices, a think tank), is also president of the board of directors of the Sloan Consortium. In general, she noted, “stakeholders are not just givers and receivers of higher education.”

Blackboard, Dr. Freedman said, “looks at how systems are set up globally”—not just a matter of setting up tracks but of reaching destinations. It brings stakeholders together to define quality in

education. A major question, he said, is “What should I be measuring?” The company is looking for performance indicators, but there has been very little research, except proprietary work done by for-profit organizations, which can identify potential problems “before a student gets in trouble.” Unfortunately, he said, “Nobody in higher education has come to Blackboard for help in identifying patterns,” although K-12 is asking for help on research. It is easy to get distracted by technical solutions, he said as an aside.

Dr. Legon said the emphasis for government and accreditors has been on certain outcomes, notably 6-year completion rates and gainful employments. However, there is no evidence that completion rates affect how faculty teach. At least online courses, though virtual, are archived: “You can see how things happened, so there is a potential for incremental improvements.” One notable factor is the willingness of online faculty, though not face-to-face faculty, to share information in such areas as how to use the tools and strategies to get students engaged. That is clear from the Sloan Consortium; there is nothing like it in other areas of higher education.

Quality Matters is concerned with setting standards. It combed the literature on distance and adult learning and came up with 40 standards and a peer review process, nonjudgmental course evaluation, and continuous course improvement. The goal, he said, is to make every course better. The standards build on a clear understanding of course objectives. Annotation to the standards becomes the basis for training. The organization now sponsors research. It has 450 members in 46 states. Dr. Legon commented that “it’s fascinating to see them sharing.” Many institutions that are not members are also using its materials.

Stating that “quality is intriguing,” Dr. Eaton noted that it should be a central dimension because “if we don’t do it, someone else will.” She added that “Online learning is still young. Expectations are still being formed and in some places it is still perceived as a problem. Also, it has become identified with for-profit institutions, whose quality is still questioned. She also considers a decentralized approach as being “enormously divisive.” The tradition has been that the professor is the entrepreneur, and “if we had standards, someone’s freedom would be limited.” Quality raises problems for accreditation, which is always looking for indicators of progress rather than making a final judgment. “There has been enormous progress in attention to outcomes, but accreditation has tried to preserve formative features. Finally, Dr. Eaton said, “The world changes. Now higher education is massified. That puts pressure on traditional norms and expectations, and there may be a disconnect.” And the beginnings of a new debate on access are making her nervous: “How do we afford access? It used to be considered an invaluable social good.”

Bruce Chaloux thought the question presented to the panel was useful, but “the question is less about quality than credibility.” If the issue were quality, there would not be the same numbers of students. The heart of the problem, he believes, is that “systems, from local to federal, are focused on an academy that goes back 100 years,” and it’s not necessarily working well. “What if we did quality assurance on every traditional course?” he asked. Higher education thought it had a structure in the 1980s with Altel but “we swung and missed.” One problem he identified is “that we’re preaching to the converted.” In Sloan’s seventh report, chief academic officers gave

“a resounding yes” to online learning; that is not so with faculty. And one problem is that accreditation standards “are set by those who vote—traditional institutions.”

He urged that higher education move to a more competence-based system. The broader issue is not with online learning itself: “If traditional was working,” he asked, “why are so few finishing?” He also thought that data collection was not so much an issue as data analysis.” And “we need to do more to reach out to federal and state systems and institutions.”

In comments from the floor, **Kevin Carey**, Education Sector, said that online learning lends itself to data collection, but the data needs to be made available to individual scholars with no limitations, and asked, “Is that likely?” Dr. Legon responded that the opportunity is there, but institutions have to be assured it is not part of the accountability process. “We only feed back to individual institutions and faculty members,” although some is being shared. Dr. Freedman commented that there is lots of data but “it’s hard to know what to do with it.” It becomes a policy discussion about how to aggregate data and dissolve barriers.

**Sally Johnstone**, provost, Winona State University, noted that now that the world is wired, she is seeing a sea change: “New faculty think nothing of working online.” She is also seeing many blended courses.

**Judith Eaton** saw a connection between the comments and questions: “Who’s going to decide the worth of higher education? We need a public policy about the external decider. But we have to keep what’s good.”

**Dr. Ebersole** noted that though Transparency by Design as yet has fewer than 15 participants, all are sharing data. He also commented that “we’re still talking about quality because we’re not there yet. There’s lots of junk—online as simply correspondence course.”

**Pamela Tate**, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, added that “we have not yet convinced employers. If they have a bad experience with one provider, it spreads to all.”

PANEL: “BARRIERS TO RECIPROCITY IN REGULATION FOR ONLINE LEARNING: THE COST OF EDUCATING AMERICA ONE STATE AT A TIME”

In introducing the panel, Dr. Hall reported that the Presidents Forum had committed to study this topic and after a task force report on it last year, 16 institutions attended a conference to discuss it. The Forum plans to contract with The Council on State Governments to move the topic forward. The intent is to overcome barriers to access and completion. He introduced moderator **Sally Johnstone**, who in turn introduced the panel: **David Dies**, executive secretary, Wisconsin Educational Approval Board; **Shane DeGarmo**, administrator, degree programs, private institutions and tuition reciprocity, Ohio Board of Regents; **Margarite Beardsley**, acting executive director, New Jersey Commission on Higher Education; **Byron Connell**, associate commissioner in higher education, New York State Education Department; and **David**

**Longanecker**, president, Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. Dr. Johnstone remarked that there were sometimes problems dealing within as well as between states. The panel hoped to answer questions about how they would characterize their interest.

Dr. DeGarmo said he was seeing a lot of growth in all aspects of higher education. Dr. Dies commented that Ohio was asserting regulatory oversight in bringing distance programs in—oversight was not bound to physical presence. The department makes determinations about whether it can accept what other states have done: “We realize there are limitations on our ability to fulfill our responsibility—there are hundreds of online courses.” The challenge is to find creative ways to protect consumers and widen the network. Dr. Longanecker is interested in assuring that regulation allows access: “Some states care a lot, some don’t. And definitions of good vary.”

Dr. Johnstone noted the diversity of interpretations of the state consumer protection role, some of which are incorporated into statutes. The question, she said, is what are the most fundamental regulatory issues related to reciprocity? Dr. Longanecker responded that “outcome will be an issue—the authenticity of outcome information. What is enough evidence of a good idea to move forward with it?” Dr. Dies said that academic quality goes to the program. The institutional look goes to the evaluation of the idea. Wisconsin has gone deeply into outcomes and decided data has to be at the program level.

Dr. Connell explained that New York approves both institutions and programs “even if contact is tenuous.” One important factor is whether the institution engages in peer review of its programs. Dr. Longanecker agreed that “whatever we do, we need external validation.” The federal government, he said, is relying less heavily now on states and institutions, but there are as yet no reasonable standards-based systems. Dr. Dies believes the design of the “triad” relationship has to change. Dr. Johnstone said the consumer protection role has evolved in states. Accreditation agencies, she said, have a quality assurance role, though it is not summative. With reciprocity, she asked, how would the roles change? Dr. Connell felt it important that “regulators retain their roles, but accrediting agencies complement what they do” to avoid redundancies. “It’s important that they work together. Dr. Dies thinks the relationship needs to have the roles clarified formally: “That can be addressed in a compact.” Dr. Connell said, “We know what we’re doing and what the accreditors are doing. Reciprocity will help us learn what other *states* are doing.” Dr. Longanecker was concerned that differences in the structure of how higher education is governed by states make it harder to standardize. “We’re having to jump through different hoops in different states,” Dr. Johnstone commented. “Can we do this while maintaining quality?”

“How do we come together is the question,” according to Dr. Longanecker. He wondered whether it was possible to create a “voluntary” mandated system. Dr. Dies thought the Presidents’ Forum could make it possible for states to come together, especially at the degree level.

Dr. Johnstone asked, “How would we make this happen? Not just establish standards but find a way for agencies to communicate on implementation ?” Dr. DeGarmo agreed that the big

challenge is to agree on standards, and then get buy-in from in-state institutions. Dr. Connell saws the steps necessary as (1) trying to identify core information, because each state has its own set of information requirements, though many are similar; (2) coalescing on which standards to apply; and (3) finding a formal way to achieve this: “A formal compact is one way, but in New York it’s the long way.” Dr. Longanecker said that the Council of State Governments is a good partner, but all states have operating entities that are vigilant: “What model would fit both New York and Wyoming?” Dr. Dies suggested looking beyond the states to learn from other partners. Teacher certification reciprocity might be a possible model, Dr. Longanecker added. But Dr. Connell objected that “we’re thinking too small, restricting ourselves to the United States.” New York has an application from Singapore: “This is an international issue that has to be addressed internationally.” Dr. Johnstone pointed out that education as a product has been an issue for the World Trade Organization for a long time, and there is a UNESCO group working on it. It could at least become an information resource. Dr. Dies suggested that one thing the Presidents’ Forum or another organization could do would be to inventory what’s available and make it possible to correct errors: “We need a way to assess what’s out there.”

Dr. Johnstone noted that it was “premature to talk about the fiscal implications.

**Michael Goldstein**, Dow, Lownes, commented from the floor that the search for a common template was both heartening and disheartening, “but lack of coordination has not slowed online growth.” He is beginning to see states apply specific criteria, such as that a B.A. program has to have 126 credits. Unfortunately, each state has different details, though “The EU dealt with this through the Bologna Accords.”

Dr. Dies found the problem of protectionism troublesome. Lumina has been attempting to address what a degree really needs, and that may have to be integrated into the discussion. Dr. Johnstone thought it was not simply a matter of regulators versus nonregulators: “In Minnesota legally a degree requires 120 credit hours. The challenge for an institution is to find creative ways to produce needed outcomes. We don’t want to suppress innovation.”

**Rick Shearer**, Eduventures, noted that “redundancy is driving up costs” and asked, “What are the next logical steps?” Dr. Longanecker added that this is the importance of quality assurance: “The consequences of getting a bad education given the cost are what drives the discussion.”

**Russell Kitchner**, American Public University System, congratulated the Presidents’ Forum for working on this. His concern is how to ensure the relevance, integrity, and fairness of components of agreements.

**A comment from the floor** expressed concern about “a sense of an almost dismissive attitude toward the regionals,” though the underlying standards are there. He wondered whether it might be possible to get the accreditors to help identify the standards. Dr. Connell did not think they would be willing to do that. Dr. Longanecker noted that there are also national accreditors and wondered whether they have abdicated from consumer protection. Dr. Dies commented that regional accreditors “don’t come often enough.”

**Burck Smith**, Straighterline, asks why programs were accredited rather than courses. Dr. Johnstone said that courses are the purview of the faculty, who make decisions about them individually.

LUNCHEON ADDRESS: “CREATING A PERFORMANCE-BASED CULTURE: A CORPORATE VIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION’S CAPACITY FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.”

In introducing **Stanley Litow**, vice president for corporate citizenship and corporate affairs and president of the IBM International Foundation, IBM Corporation, Michael Goldstein spoke of Dr. Litow’s enduring commitment to education and public service, having served, for instance, as deputy chancellor in New York and also having run a think tank.

Dr. Litow pointed out that tech companies compete on talent and therefore need sustained partnerships with higher education. Today’s global economic competition makes talent and partnerships even more crucial. He also noted the importance of cross-sector understanding: “We need people who are hungry to learn on the job—education is continuous.” IBM spends \$637 million a year on skill development, most of it spent for online courses, because that is what individualized needs call for. Ph.D. holders earn 50% more than those with a B.A. The company is projecting that the U.S. will soon have a shortfall of 3 million college graduates. “There is no national talent development policy, and without one, we can’t compete.”

U.S. higher education has been the world’s best, but that position is threatened. “The need to develop the domestic talent pool is urgent,” he said, but it is not solely the responsibility of higher education. It also needs government and business involvement. None of them can do it alone.

Curricula have to be adapted to the new situation. For instance, server sciences was not a subject 10 years ago. IBM provides faculty and has research programs. It shares intellectual property. There is a whole new level of collaboration available, linked to new jobs. “Business goes where the opportunity is,” Dr. Litow said. Ministers of Higher Education in the Middle East are very anxious to connect with business.

IBM has personal learning accounts. The employee puts in \$1,000; IBM matches half. The accounts are portable. It also has a new program to get students through community colleges. “Business can do more. But so can higher education,” he said. And federal and state policies are needed to attract talent from everywhere. ([worldcommunitygrid.org](http://worldcommunitygrid.org)). This is not business as usual, it is a shared effort. IBM is sharing with institutions it depends on.

Mr. Goldstein asked if business had a role in bringing the subject before governments. Dr. Litow said, “Yes, if we can work together.” Asked about the new IBM program in New York, Dr. Litow explained that “Preparing for an Education Nation” is for grades 9–14 (high school plus two years of community college). It has an afterschool component, so students have a 9–5 day. IBM is working with the New York Hall of Sciences and with other companies; graduates of the

program are first in line for jobs at IBM. The program has required changes in curricula. It is expected to expand eventually beyond New York. IBM is posting the materials on line.

IBM also has an extensive program, the Corporate Service Corps, which takes the top 500 employees and places them in 18 markets internationally to help governments. “It’s a new model for training leaders.” There is a Smarter Cities component in the U.S.

Dr. Ebersole asked how Dr. Litow sees business and higher education coming together. Dr. Litow said, “Our door is open, but I don’t really see the structure. We do well in bringing each sector together, but not so well across sectors.”

Mr. Goldstein noted that IBM is the quintessential global information technology company and asked, “Do you think that IBM should access higher education institutions wherever it is?” Dr. Litow explained that the business model used to be to transfer the U.S. system everywhere, but now “we’re thinking in a globally integrated way.”

ADDRESS: “INNOVATING AROUND ACCESS, QUALITY, AND COMPLETION”

Dr. Shiffman introduced **Mark David Milliron**, deputy director for postsecondary improvement, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as having “a long and distinguished record of working around the world.”

The Gateses, Dr. Milliron said, are “impatient optimists.” Higher education is the pathway to possibilities, but “intergenerational transmission of poverty has never been higher.” The foundation considers the 16–26 age group the most critical. One concern is that though access to higher education has doubled, though a diversity of people start, 68% of top-quartile students from college-going families earn a degree by age 26 but only 9% of first-generation students from the bottom quartile do so. Billions of dollars, federal and state, are spent on activities that never lead to a credential. And millions of students are trying but are burdened by “the lead weight of failure.”

Among the techniques that need to be applied, he said, are “new-genning” the infrastructure; immersive learning; engaging the classroom; and curricular resource strategy. People want to talk about new and older students and how students will be accessing these resources. A suite of infrastructure communications is needed. Carnegie-Mellon has an on-line resource center to help students get the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes they need to get to the next level. Net-Gens are online 12.2 hours a week, 28% more than even Gen X, and 80% use mobile phones to access data. Meanwhile, information sources are moving from fixed media to search engines to answer engines. This generation is also learning from computers and video games, as Marc Prensky’s book, *Don’t Bother Me, Mom—I’m Learning*, makes clear. Video games are played in 68% of households; the average gamer is 35, and has been playing for 12 years.

The problem is how to preserve the learning moment. “Students are end-running us,” Dr. Milliron said. They are using tools like ratemyprofessor.com, for instance, and Wikipedia. The curricular resource strategy can be based on analytics. “We’ve got to face the brutal facts.” Gates

grantees are asked, “Where are you losing students?” Use the data about a given student to help that student. Rio Salada College in Tempe knows within eight days what a student needs.

Many find the biggest problem is remedial math. Course-based efforts do not work. Deep diagnostics are needed, and then a context-based effort. Dr. Milliron calls for a customized, context-based approach, “especially at the front door.” That will require, he says, real-time risk modeling to target interventions. One point is that when students are employed, the number one reason for firing is interpersonal problems. There is also a tendency to become slaves to technology.

“We need critical, creative, social, and courageous learning,” he said, but creative is being stripped out. Courageous learning is preparing students for jobs that as yet do not exist.

Online learning has been in existence for about 15 years and is starting to get into patterns. “We need to start rethinking what’s working,” Dr. Milliron said. “Getting them into college is not the goal. Getting them through is. They are going through a lot. They are coming to you to change their lives.” He also said a deeper conversation is needed about mobile learning, which he believes is easier in Africa and the Asian Pacific and Caribbean regions.

**A comment from the floor** noted that [nextgenlearning.com](http://nextgenlearning.com) is taking promising innovations and bringing them to scale. It is consortium-based.

Another **member of the audience** asked about statistics on faculty adoption of online learning, and “how do we move the faculty to new approaches?” Dr. Milliron said that 15 years ago, only early adopters in the faculty were willing to go online—it was 90% face to face. Now it’s 60%. “The conversation tends to be dominated by the loudest,” he said, “those at the poles. We need to create space for the middle.”

ADDRESS: “LEVERAGING POLICY TO IMPROVE HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEGREE COMPLETION”

In introducing **Louis Soares**, director of the Center for American Progress postsecondary education program, Dr. Hall noted that a recent discussion in Dallas had been about “fixing what is, and fixing what will be.” Dr. Soares has been a leader in workforce development and capital issues particularly at the federal level.

For technology to make a difference, Dr. Soares said, “it needs to be aligned with basic human needs.” Most jobs being created need at least some college and often more. In 1973, 24% of jobs needed at least some college; by 2018 it will be 67%. Those who do not complete postsecondary education will fall out of the middle class.

The president’s goals could change the conversation. The Pell Grants could get everyone to at least one year of postsecondary education rather than just some to more.

There are more working learners, but the idea of nontraditional learning takes the existing system as the norm. “The definitions serve the interests of existing institutions,” Dr. Soares said, “not

working learners.” Minimally nontraditional students have one risk factor. Moderate and highly nontraditional have five or six.

Instead of talking about risk factors, the conversation should be about competitive advantages. “Risk factors” seem to say “not eligible for higher education.” They are used as excuses to eliminate students, not engage them. If there is a failure to retain, “we’re doing something wrong or the students are—but they are engaging with higher education in far more fluid ways.”

At the federal level, Dr. Soares said, the new paradigm puts K-12 in competition with higher education for budget. It might be better to combine higher education and workforce development. Higher education policy does not cover any of what working learners need. Workforce development is underfunded, and higher education should be about *all*, not *some*. The system needs to be changed. He suggested moving from crisis intervention to credentials that equal one year of higher education, and that the emphasis be on job placement, not career counseling. Vendors, he said, should either offer college credit or show how it gets you there. Design flexibility is needed to fully serve.

**A question from the floor** asked how the Workforce Reinvestment Act recommendations were received. Dr. Soares said that 51% of the workforce development boards recommended they pass. Job Centers have been transformed to career counseling. But “nothing suggests that companies are good at workforce development,” he added. **Another comment** pointed out that “most of us are national” and WIA boards relate to a state. Dr. Soares explained that 15% of WIA grants are discretionary grants to governors that are handled through state governments rather than the boards.

**Dr. Longanecker** described the WIA as “disastrous” because it is not ambitious enough. “HHS also encourages training for low-wage, low-skill jobs and those trained don’t get a positive experience.” “Are we pursuing a national human capital strategy?” he asked, “Or a poverty reduction strategy? There is an inherent tension in WIA.”

PANEL: “ON THE HORIZON: LEGISLATION, POLICY, AND REGULATION”

**John Ebersole** as moderator introduced the panel: **Rebecca Campoverde**, vice president, government relations, Kaplan; **Russell S. Kitchner**, associate vice president for regulatory and governmental relations, American Public University System; **Jennifer Blum**, partner, Drinker Biddle & Reath; **Charles S. Lenth**, vice president for policy analysis and academic affairs, State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO); and **Julie Davis Bell**, education program director, National Conference of State Legislatures. He then noted that the state of Illinois is not recognizing certification for secondary school principals that is delivered entirely online and asked the panelists, “Why is education being discriminated against and what can we do about it?”

After saying that “The Presidents Forum is doing a great service in raising these issues—I hope this meeting ends on an optimistic note. The needs are great but so are the opportunities; it would be wrong to do too little,” Dr. Lenth noted that in the last two decades, all states have taken

initiatives to welcome economic development, but education has to play catch-up. “States are operating with inadequate information.” What state regulators do is not transparent” “We have structure issues.” About half of SHEEO members are government boards and represent four-year institutions. “We are divided in almost every possible way. But we can provide information on who at the state level does what and why.” There is a useful shared website that is a good first step.

There is an active effort and growing national interest in clinical components, he went on. But the decision about principals in Illinois was made not by the higher education agency but by the Department of Education. “There are still important roles for state policymakers, especially in areas like teachers,” he said.

Dr. Ebersole asked Dr. Bell, “Do you think states recognize what is happening in online learning?” She responded first by complimenting Lumina, the Gates Foundation, and the Presidents’ Forum for pushing the issue. Now it is coming down to the states to see what that means for them. They do not understand the effect of regulation on online learning, though online is a fantastic option. “Legislators on average are old,” she said. “They have no clue about sophisticated online learning, and what it’s doing about their concerns.”

Dr. Ebersole noted the continued work of the Access Project and the military’s concerns about course completion. He sees a “counting” problem: “I would call for a very open conversation about the quality of education. We have to do it well to have a sustainable business model.” He sees an opportunity to do a better job of measuring. One question is the proportion of an institution’s budget goes to marketing and other areas that might be considered “buying students.” Texas Tech and Utah give National Merit scholars a free ride. A textbook grant might be all right because it is not transferable; “laptops? Too much.” But it is not in the public interest to charge all with the problems of a few. He asked Dr. Campoverde how the Department of Education’s attitude to for-profit institutions, and also the “gainful employment” provision, affects Kaplan.

Dr. Campoverde considered the administration’s goal to be laudable, but thought the administration knows it cannot be met solely by not-for-profit institutions. For-profits are growing, and students take the most convenient path. “The risk factors turn them away from traditional institutions,” she said. At least 17% have two or more risk factors. Many higher education institutions, both for-profit and not-, understand the needs of this group. “The administration has legitimate concerns about preparation and employability,” she said, but those are not reflected in the gainful employment provision, which is mainly concerned with the debt burden. The longer someone is in school, the higher the debt. The Department of Education does metrics program by program. That may be counterproductive: why start in a program if it is not going to be here in two to three years? All vocational programs are affected. Dr. Campoverde hopes to see a more reasonable approach. “We’re admired [in the U.S.] for the diversity of postsecondary education. We at Kaplan will work to see that continues.”

Dr. Ebersole asked Jennifer Blum about what the November elections might bring for higher education. She replied that she agreed with Dr. Campoverde that the goals seemed to be irreconcilable: “The direction against for-profit is misguided. We’re having an incomplete dialog

with the Department of Education. Flexible and innovative applies to not-for-profit as well as for-profit.” The regulations scheduled for November 1 apply to the whole sector, and “the online community should act as one.” All are concerned about whether the Department of Education should be defining words like credit hour, she went on. Also, for higher education in general, there is a need to get at the heart of what quality means. That implies engagement by the whole higher education community.

Dr. Ebersole thought he was seeing a shift from learning outcomes and asked, “Has the focus narrowed?”

**Holly Kuzmich**, Margaret Spellings and Company, commented from the floor that she was excited to see the conversation turning from inputs to outputs such as completion. She noted a general bias against for-profits, even in K-12, but debt is an issue writ larger in postsecondary education. In any case, “the discussion is anecdotal—we’re missing data.”

**A question from the floor** asked what is being done about the digital divide. The answer was that the data were not available, but the issue should rise again in the new context.

**Dr. Longanecker** said that in online learning “it’s tough to put practices together and maintain quality.” One of the challenges, he said, is contextual learning, which might be achieved by partnering with employers. “How does that work?” he asked. Dr. Ebersole responded that in nursing “it’s by no means easy.” The indicators available are not appropriate for everyone. The military, he noted, is doing almost all its training using simulations. Ms. Blum said that many of her clients are “finding hands-on ways.” Most online providers recognize the social aspects of face-to-face, but need a way to assess them. But “online provides a new layer.”

Dr. Kitchner said that for many institutions, “our population is already working or coming with some practical experience. Many are practicing while they attend. Our objective is to make sure the experience is relevant.”

**A commentator from the floor** said, “We would never take away the practicum. But in Illinois 25% of programs have never had a supervisory visit, yet with online and Skype there is twice as much interaction.”

**Bernard Luskin**, Touro University Worldwide, noted that public funds are expected to be flat; it will be a long time before there is growth in public sector higher education. There is also an innate polarization between for-profit and not-for-profit. That may be ameliorated, but “maybe there’s a mutated format.” Is it a tax question? Organizational structure? “Some institutions have both for- and not-for-profit.” People have discussed with him how to do that.

## SUMMARY

Dr. Ebersole highlighted points made during the forum:

Dr. Spellings clarified “the change we are all feeling.” She pointed up the need for data, but also sent a message about the need for leadership.

For the first panel, the quality issue is “the newcomer on the block.” All online is not equal. Quality does matter. We need to refresh our own offerings. There is also concern about the credibility we need to deal with stakeholders and others.

Panel 2 made it clear that there may be a need for some standards for reciprocity and discussed a common database.

Dr. Litow presented in some ways an ideal model but also was clear about the effects of competition worldwide and the need for talent. He promoted a team of higher education and business and raised some concern about an eventual standard of living.

Dr. Millilorn warned about a competition between traditional and online learning and defined a need to work together. Traditionals may need a working conference on how to get online.

Dr. Soares spoke to the workforce of today and what we can do. Online can help overcome the risk factors. Academics are not typically promoted in workforce development.

The final panel again reiterated the need for data, especially in terms of how to define quality—and how to police it. Online students may be more likely to complete. And “we need more postsecondary education.” For- and not-for-profits working today can help. The issue is more about the actions of a few.

*Agenda for the future:*

- Work with Quality Matters as an advocate and partner
- Work with states to simplify delivery across state lines

*New:*

- Take a position on workforce development
- Work to promote innovation: perhaps in coordination with ACE, the Chamber, and unions?