EIGHTH ANNUAL

PRESIDENTS' FORUM

OF EXCELSIOR COLLEGE

The Presidents' Forum convened on October 13, 2011, in the Hall of Flags of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 1615 H Street, NW, Washington, DC. The subject of the meeting was "Charting a Course for Online Higher Education Through Rough Seas."

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WELCOME

Paul Shiffman, assistant vice president for strategic and governmental relations, Excelsior College, and executive director, Presidents' Forum, welcomed the participants to the Eighth Forum, which he explained would focus on state responsibility. He also thanked Learning House for sponsoring the breakfast. Steve Huey, chief operating officer, explained that Learning House existed to help schools struggling to move on-line. He complimented Dr. Shiffman on the "incredible information and intellectual discourse" provided by the Presidents' Forum.

Dr. Shiffman then introduced the keynote speaker, James E. Geringer, as "unassuming but a true Renaissance man." Dr. Geringer, a former governor of Wyoming, chairs the Board of Trustees of Western Governors University, which he helped found.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: "BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO HIGHER LEARNING: ARE WE CONTENT WITH WHERE WE ARE?"

Dr. Geringer pointed out that sparsely populated Wyoming has "high altitudes, low multitudes, and great attitudes," which in some ways stimulated the founding of Western Governors University. He also explained how the book *Complexity Avalanche: Overcoming the Threat to Technology Adoption* by J.B. Wood has revealed a "consumption gap" in that technology is now ahead of consumers. He ascribed barriers to online productivity growth to business practice integration and organizational and employment issues rather than technology. "The future depends on how well we educate citizens," he said, especially in terms of what they can contribute to society.

In reviewing the current situation, Dr. Geringer noted that it will take the states more than four years to recover from the financial crisis of 2008 but the real fiscal pressures are primarily at the federal level, where

1. Federal money will bring more regulation.
2. There are greater expectations for K-20 integration.
3. The problem is balancing efficiency, affordability, and increased productivity.

In the attempt to also balance quality, access, and cost, while it is not impossible to have high quality at lower cost, that requires rethinking. This is especially true because employers cannot fill higher-skilled jobs. The challenge, then, is not just college attainment, but in a skill that matters. At the moment 5.6 million U.S. students are taking an online course, 4.0 million of them in public schools. Meanwhile, there are 50 million Chinese students.

"Our global standing is being challenged," Dr. Geringer said. One problem he cited is the onerous state process for regulating online courses. The federal College Completion Toolkit lays out strategies for governors and gives examples. Tennessee, for instance, is now basing funding on completion rates. An example of the shift in global standings was the 2009 OECD Education at a Glance report. Most other countries are outstripping the U.S.

The U.S. goal is that 60% of Americans have gone to college by 2020. In 2008, 37.8% of those 25 – 34 had done so; the projection at the current rate of growth would be 40% by 2020. Another 8.1 million students would have to graduate by 2010. Currently, the average rate of increase is 0.34%; we need 4.2%. The traditional delivery model is not sustainable. In the last five years, for instance, college costs are up 75% and family income up just 11%.

"We need strategies for educating older adults, who have the richest experience," Dr. Geringer said. He suggested targeting the middle-aged (baby boomers) because the oldest and the youngest were less inclined to take courses on line.

Complete College America has issued a national report, "Time Is the Enemy," referring to college completion. However, 75% of US students are now in nontraditional courses, and the 40% of those who graduate are not counted properly. Meanwhile, in traditional programs students are wasting time on excess credits because higher education requires getting courses in specific sequence. Here Dr. Geringer cited Clayton Christensen's book, *The Innovator's Dilemma,* and the question of how disruptive technology can be applied in education.

That is, in effect, Dr. Geringer said, the mission of Western Governors University. The antidote to tradition is that education be simple, convenient, accessible, and affordable. WGU students range in age from 16 to 83, with an average of 36. Part-time and full-time programs cost the same. The idea for WGU arose in 1995; the business and academic models are both new. For WGU, online is not just a new way to deliver an old system.

"Why doesn't competency count more than paper?" Dr. Geringer asked. He noted that Wyoming convinced Microsoft to certification courses in high schools, given the distances students would otherwise have to go to get the courses. WGU recognized, similarly, that there was a large underserved student population, and that one solution was to hold learning constant but let the time vary. It was no longer the "sage on the stage" but the "seer by the side." The program involves considerable mentoring. WGU has far more student services than a traditional college. "You need to change what you're doing," he said. The concern is core competencies rather than

buildings. Classrooms, he commented, are used only 22% of the time—and soon even less. By 2014 50% will take one online course.

The bottom line, Dr. Geringer said, is that "employers say students aren't learning what they need."

PANEL I: MAKING HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE: RATIONALIZING THE STATES' RULES, REGULATIONS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORIZATION

After introducing the moderator, Travis Reindl, program director of the Education Division of the National Governors Association, Dr. Shiffman challenged the panel to clarify what the responsibilities of the states are. Dr. Reindl responded that with the growing evolution of online learning into a permanent part of higher education, "the issue of how we regulate will be with us and we have to figure out how to deal with it. Organizations are looking for options." He asked, the panelists: "What's next, if what we have today is not enough? And what is the role for your organization?

Lee Posey of the National Council of State Legislatures explained that the NCSL educates state legislators on higher education and is working to do a better job. NCSL members, he said, tend to be older and "may be more skeptical about nontraditional learning," but they are aware of completion rates and recognize the group to be brought along. He expects state legislatures to become more active. In 2011 37 bills were introduced to regulate higher education, so the states are paying attention and have oversight authority.

John Ware said members of the National Association of State Administrators and Supervisors of Private Schools share ideas for best practices and are working to agree on common forms for applications by the end of the year; that is important, he noted, to the reciprocity process.

The Council of State Governments, Pam Goins said, works with the executive branch as well as legislators. State laws vary hugely; they're "a patchwork of content and language." A Council drafting team is starting to talk about the scope of a compact. "The ultimate goal is protection for students," she commented. Once a compact is drafted, an advisory group will vet it and then the Council will undertake an education campaign in the states—"It's a voluntary process."

Russell Poulin said there is "lots of information sharing" in WCET, which is a partner on a survey of what institutions are doing; 69 percent have not yet applied to the state. WCET has created the State Authorization Network, with systems for resources for groups of institutions. His question was, Can Southern States be replicated?

A question from the floor asked, "How much consistency can we realistically expect? There are 50 different politics and cultures as well as higher education systems." Dr. Poulin responded that "we have to guard against trying to get *perfect* agreement." It will be important to get *some* agreement and much trust. The hurdles are states that have little or no regulation. The western region "probably has four of the least regulated."

Another problem, he said, is that financial models are big issues. The work is funded by fees. He added that W. Edwards Deming said "You can't inspect quality into a process." It is necessary to know what is actually happening with outcomes, with consumers.

Dr. Ware said that in regard to the concern about lack of regulation, "The compact could help solve that. It will come down to the actual wording. Ohio and others do in fact practice reciprocity." Ultimately, he said, the question will be: Will it make my job easier?

Dr. Reindl asked, "How should the states and the federal government divide responsibility? In response Dr. Posey said he felt strongly that "this is a state issue; they will want to lead the process" because they see it as linked to workforce development and economic concerns. Federal preemption will be a problem if it hampers states. "State legislators are notorious copycats," he said. "Any multistate effort builds synergy. What is needed from the federal government are good resources, good technical assistance, and general guidance."

Dr. Goins agreed that the states "do like to replicate," but there is also worry about education in general, and K-12 students online. In the end, "we should still expect states to meet quality standards."

A questioner asked, "What hints of success are there? What barriers?" Dr. Ware said the big issue is that there must be a minimum level of consumer protection. Another question is just what is the state's role: Ohio laws say enforce *minimum* not *highest* standards. It is easier to agree on a minimum than on quality, though "Accreditation promotes quality."

Dr. Goins was asked, "How do you navigate this politically? Has the Council experience with compacts?" She explained that "compacts have been around for 200 years." A state group is created to monitor and set standards and governance structure. When she was asked, "Outside of a compact, what should legislators think about online learning?" she noted that getting a common set of ideals for approaching online learning is a lot of work.

Dr. Geringer commented that there has been a longstanding commitment to a compact on K-12 education, but an unintended consequence is a cost of perhaps $750,000 a year. He suggested that an alternative to compacts could be a governor's executive order.

A questioner asked, "If compacts do take long, what would be an early win?" Dr. Poulin said that "lots of institutions think they don't have to apply, will wait it out." He asked, "If institutions just ignore the laws, will regulators become irrelevant?

Christine Mullins of the Institutional Technology Council asked, "Where are the accrediting agencies on this?" Dr. Ware said they would have to "review and approve," which he considered "another reason for reciprocity." But he noted that state licensing exams are a factor."

Dr. Poulin pointed out that when the federal regulations came out, regional accreditors said it was not their issue, but now SHEEO is talking about working with state regulators.

Peter Smith, Kaplan University, said, "There's another whole piece: How do you sustain an environment where entrepreneurs can innovate? We don't know who to go to. How do you regulate something we never thought about?" Dr. Ware said, "The real answer is to be forward-looking in drafting. When it's reactive, it's hurting 99% instead of 1%.""

Dr. Posey expressed surprise that the regulations were "mostly reactive," but said there were also grants and programs and pilots that may promote innovation. Dr. Goins did not think compacts would quash innovation.

Paul Shiffman commented from the floor that "One concern of mine is that there's no good process for legislative review. Few legislators know what's on the books." Dr. Reindl thought that the current fiscal circumstances offered states an opportunity to look at what's there, what could be smaller and more effective. It will be critical, he said, to "advise on options and best practices." Dr. Posey added that "Asking those questions offers opportunities for education to consider how to do it better." Dr. Poulin added that Duquesne publishing completion rates is "a great model—once we start doing that, it starts a government and legislative dialog."

Greg Ferenbach asked about NASAP's efforts to create forms: "How far can that go without a compact?" Dr. Ware thought that was "not so hard. Most states want the same information, though they make different use of it." He thought forms should work well with the compact.

A comment from the floor noted a complicating factor: regulators charge different rates and think of this as a revenue stream. Dr. Ware thought there might be "some territorial issues," and these do need to be addressed.

Dr. Reindl thanked the panelists and closed the discussion by noting that it had illustrated that "states are very cognizant that something needs to be done."

PANEL II: ADVANCING MULTI-STATE RECIPROCITY FOR INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORIZATION

Moderator Robert Donley, executive director, Iowa Board of Regents, introduced the panel.

Paul Lingenfelter of SHEEO, taking a national perspective, thought "We're beginning to make progress. There has been too much regulation, too little educational attainment. We're been fuzzy about outcome standards and how to get there. There's no national consensus on what postsecondary education should be, nothing parallel to the K-12 common core state standards. But after 25 years, we're now getting serious about assessments." But, he added, "We won't get effective regulation until we build consensus on components of an effective program—what will advance knowledge, not just recognize it."

"Accreditation and regulation are not getting the job done," Dr. Lingenfelter said. "Reciprocity is essential to avoid wasteful duplication in states *and* institutions." Compacts, he thought, would provide real transparency: "Make it visible so others can judge." Maybe national regulation would be feasible under the commerce clause.

Alan Contreras, a former Oregon regulator, pointed out that states licensed first, adding "federal regulations recognize that." Not many are looking for more federal rule-making, he thought. Reciprocal recognition of drivers licenses, he said, shows that "compacts can work."
He said multi-state agreements are "not trying to get rid of state regulation," although too often that is an "uncompromising commitment to adequacy."

Responding to a comment from the previous panel, Dr. Contreras said that "Executive orders can be done, but they don't necessarily deal with consumer protection issues. You have to make sure you deal with the whole package of issues. Also, if you eliminate bureaucracy totally, you may eliminate ability to do research, respond to student issues, and so on."

A questioner asked, "What is an accreditor's job? How would a compact overlap with that?"

Panelist George Roedler, a Minnesota regulator, said that "What the federal government does doesn't change state law." Accreditors should make sure schools are operating legally, he said. It is sometimes difficult to find out who is offering courses. "If an institution is registered, we have a contact point, and a grip."

Nebraska regulator Marshall Hill commented that in 11 years as a regulator in Texas and now 7 in Nebraska, there was always the same problem: how to enable good actors to innovate but retain the ability to deal with bad actors. And from a state regulator's perspective, it is hard to get state attorneys general to do anything about consumer protection.

The problem in dealing with institutional approvals as Dr. Hill saw it is to find commonalities among states that do things 50 different ways, especially when the differences can equal comparative advantages. "Texas is very strict," he said, and "Nebraska doesn't want to regulate anything." However, a new state law "plugged some vulnerabilities so we could go after the bad guys."

One challenge, he said, is to "define physical presence reasonably—it's possible to do it, but not easy."

Moderator Donley asked, "Will this change what is offered? What is being done?"

Dr. Ebersole noted from the floor that Excelsior is registered in 54 jurisdictions. That cost $300,000, half of which is recurring. He asked Dr. Hill, "What does regional accreditation need to do for consumer and student protection?"

Dr. Hill responded that larger and regional accreditors are "doing a good enough job for hundreds and thousands of institutions," but they have not made the for-profits look good. Dr. Contreras thought the problem was that they "don't have the ability to investigate and resolve micro-student problems," though "maybe that can't be fixed." Dr. Lingenfelter suggested that "lack of consistency may be the problem. The variety adds to difficulties in their being accepted." Dr. Roedler added that "the compact drafters are talking about how or whether to incorporate accreditors."

Sharyl Thompson commented that Capella had had to cease operating in some states. Her problem is trying to keep up with what's happening in the states, changes in policies, decisions sometimes contradictory to regulations: How do non-state institutions deal with this? she asked.

Dr. Contreras said that "Those states are screwing up. But the federal government poking wasp nests has wakened the states." He expects change to take a while, however.

Dr. Roedler suggested that in questionable situations an institution should try to get a statement in writing, adding that "regulators may make changes if the problem is brought to their attention." Dr. Hill added that "we need to make it easier on responsible institutions." Dr. Lingenfelter thought "we need an ethic among the states for minimal effective regulation and make that a community standard." From the floor Dr. Geringer added that "We need to find ways to say yes, to ask what problem are we trying to solve? rather than What are we trying to achieve?"

LUNCHEON ADDRESS: ADVANCING BEYOND THE CURRENT HORIZON: THE PROMISE OF ONLINE LEARNING

In introducing the speaker, James Applegate, Lumina Foundation Senior Vice President for Program Development, Michael Goldstein said that rationalizing state regulation of online learning is "an important topic for us" and noted that "Jim was a state regulator. Lumina has at the most senior level someone who understands."

Dr. Applegate began by setting out "The Big Goal": to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. To do this will require 278,000 more graduates a year, every year. "Current production," he said, "yields 112,000 additional graduates a year, so there is an annual gap of 166,000 graduates."

Achieving the big goal is important because today "a high school diploma by itself is simply a ticket to being a member of the working poor." Meanwhile, there is a college as well as a high school dropout problem: "Adult learners need disruptive innovation." This is particularly important because the recession has accelerated a long-term decline in middle-skilled, middle-wage jobs. Half of the jobs lost in layoffs are gone permanently.

Dr. Applegate said. "We need disruptive innovation because incremental won't work." Citing the analogy of steel mini-mills, which eventually took over the industry, he said that the Western Governors model will move into the market. Today only 15% of students attend 4-year colleges and live on campus; 43% attend two-year institutions; 32% work full-time; 25% are over 30. Degree completion rates range from 18.6% for Hispanic students to 59.2% for Asian students; 35.8 million working-age adults have attended college but lack a degree. "To succeed," Dr. Applegate said, "we must close the gaps," some of which are especially worrying because population growth differs substantially by group.

"There is a huge issue around class," he went on. In 2008, 77 percent of people from the highest income quartile had achieved a B.A. by the time they were 24, but only 10 percent of those from the lowest income quartile.

Disruptive innovation is necessary to go to scale quickly and reach those least well served by the current system. Catalytic change is needed so that scaling of practice will build public policy advocacy.

Traditional online learning was simply bolted on to class-based, faculty-centric practices. The new approach would feature open, competence-based student-centric learning, with disaggregated roles, and would cost less.

To create an enabling policy environment, it will be necessary to (1) remove regulatory barriers to scalability, production, and innovation. "Sometimes it's just necessary to get rid of the nine bad policies." (2) Hold all institutions accountable for quality and student success in college and the workplace. (3) Fund (public subsidies, student aid) with a focus on performance, especially for under-represented groups. "Soon employment rates will be as important as graduation rates," Dr. Applegate said. "We need all institutions to be responsible, to be accountable for what happens to students. If they're not getting employed, why? We need to focus on performance, and recognize institutions that take on the tough groups."

"The public gets it," he said. "They don't need courses, they need learning. This is a supply-side problem." Dr. Applegate ended by quoting poet Adrienne Rich: "The maps we're using were out of date by years."

In the discussion that followed, it was pointed out that public institutions don't have money to reach everyone; online learning could really help but states put up barriers; quality could be considered clear and transparent learning, which the students demonstrate in the next of their lives—"anybody not serving students is not providing quality education." Currently, proxies are used for measuring learning, rather than outcomes. Productivity and quality must be intertwined.

At the close of the discussion, Paul Shiffman thanked Dow Lohnes, PLLC, for sponsoring the luncheon and the other sponsors for their contributions to the Forum: the Lumina Foundation, the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, the United States District Learning Association, and Learning House.

PANEL III: ONLINE LEARNING: OPENING NEW PATHWAYS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Moderator Darcy Hardy of the Department of Labor introduced the panel and asked them, "Is online learning a disruptive innovation?"

Peter J. Stokes of Eduventures thought there were "some myths about the story," saying that innovation "starts at the margin; it's easier to use because it's crude, it's cheaper, and there's a new audience." He was not sure that online learning qualifies. Disruptive innovation, he said, puts companies out of business, and asked: Why don't higher education institutions go out of business? The answer, he suggested, might be regulation.

There also needs to be more thought about the margins, for instance, how we think about credits and degrees, he said.

Sally Johnstone of Western Governors University thought, however, that "even traditional online education disrupts. It makes faculty think about what they're doing, makes students go and look."

One problem she identified was how to demonstrate and assess new knowledge. She also reminded the group that "not everybody is ready to take full responsibility for their own learning."

Meg Benke of Empire State College, who is president of Sloan-C, noted she is starting to see traditional institutions talk about online and blended learning. To be disruptive, she said, it is necessary to find ways to work together.

When the panel was asked whether it was intended to certify learning or knowledge, Dr. Johnstone said, "When you define a sufficient amount of knowledge and skills that earns a degree or certification—you can certify that learning has taken place if knowledge and skills are working for the student."

John Flores of USDLA commented that "most universities and K–12 aren't differentiated. Techniques, curves don't change. How do you differentiate between online programs and one-size fits all?"

Like Dr. Stokes, Maryland Online's Julie Hamlin was not convinced that online is disruptive. She asked, "Has online become its own establishment subject to disruption?" She added that

"We tend to forget that the person served is the student. The question is how to become creative, to meet the student at the point of need. Whole movements have to change."

Asking "What are the knowledge and skills?" Dr. Johnstone said, "Degrees have to respond to the context – the discussion is not context-free. We need to figure out what's good, what works, what to take forward." Darcy Hardy added that at the Department of Labor, she has realized that community college grantees have to work with local employers in designing curricula, so they can produce what employees are looking for.

A questioner asked, "In our own institutions what happens on campus that stifles online learning?" Dr. Johnstone suggested that with regional accreditation, "there's lots to whine about. It's a cheap system compared to other countries, but very flawed. You can't ignore accreditors. How do you serve a host of them, all different? Western Governors was a real disruption that got agreement from four of the seven regulators. This could be very useful for reciprocity."

Dr. Stokes said that accreditation is the single largest barrier to innovation in higher education: "We would like a way to deliver education without accreditation." One problem, he said, is that "we try to cut 2% everywhere instead of thinking what to get rid of totally." In sum, "We need a different kind of quality assurance."

Dr. Johnstone thought that state regulators "should educate about what quality education is."

From the floor Michael Goldstein agreed: "Let us have proof of concept. As we rationalize state regulation, we need to do the same for accreditation, not just regionalize it."

Dr. Hardy asked the panelists to sum up in one word:

> Dr. Johnstone: individualized learning experience
>
> Dr. Hamlin: better learning, sticky learning
>
> Dr. Stokes: cloud, archiving learning
>
> Dr. Benke: connecting learning
>
> Dr. Ebersole: Access

ADDRESS: A NEW ECOLOGY OF LEARNING: DISRUPTIVE DEVELOPMENTAL FORCES THAT ARE TRANSFORMING THE TEACHING/LEARNING PARADIGM

Dr. Ebersole introduced Peter Smith, senior vice president, Kaplan University, to talk about taking better care of the adult learner.

Dr. Smith noted at once that "it is difficult to overestimate the durability of campus institutions," but "when there is a promise of opportunity, there is an enormous amount at stake." Ultimately, with every learner, the question is, What's going on *here?*

Essentially, Dr. Smith said, up to 10 years ago everything was built on scarcity, but "the logic is no longer there." Meritocracy, he added, has been a great part of our myth structure.

Today, the power for change is no longer controlled by institutions but by the environments around them. "Existing institutions can't do it. If we freight them with that burden, we will fail."

Online is not the disruption, Dr. Smith pointed out: "It's what you do with the medium." Education is the process of extracting learning from experience.

He said, "We appreciate candor about our different sectors," but asked, "Who are the third party auditors of whether the sectors square up?" The real question at the end of the day should be: Are institutions doing what they say they are doing well?

As learning becomes more individualized, "control of assessment becomes mass customized," Dr. Smith said, citing MIT's Open Course. The institutional differentiator becomes the quality of support. Gap analysis allows for instant discrepancy-based changes in curriculum. "It's going to happen, in many forms." Kaplan can know in weeks where the problem is for a particular student. There is, in a sense, a diffusion of power that makes it necessary to "be patient and urgent at the same time."

PRESENTATION: A REPORT FROM THE CROW'S NEST

Drawing from his experience with the Coast Guard, Dr. Ebersole assessed the climate for online learning. Reminding the audience that "Red Sky at Night, Sailor's Delight," he found much to be delighted about:

- Excelsior sponsored a Zogby poll (the third since 2007) of how employers and human resources professionals view credentials earned online, which found that

  - 40% of HR professionals had in the last year hired someone who completed a degree online; 80% agreed that an online degree is as credible as a campus degree; all said their views have become more positive; 80% think an online credential from a well-known college is more valuable than a campus credential from a lesser-known institution; and 80% thought the self-motivation and self-discipline required to complete an online program, plus the comfort with technology it represents, are valuable to an employer.

  - Among executives and owners, 71% were familiar with online programs, up from 61% in 2007, and 49% considered online credentials credible, up from 43%. They considered accreditation more important than the name of the institution and the quality of the graduates.

- The IES Report, "Learning at a Distance," found that from 2000 to 2008
  - The percentage of undergraduates enrolled in at least one online class grew from 8% to 20%.
  - Online courses were more popular in computer science and business.
  - The most common source of online classes was a two-year community college.
  - The most common source of online degrees was a for-profit institution.

- The 8th annual Sloan Consortium Report found that
  - 63% of institutions said online learning was critical to their plans.
  - 5.6 million students enrolled in at least one online course in fall 2009.
  - The growth rate for online was 21%; the growth rate for all higher education was 2%.
  - 66% of academic leaders rated online outcomes as the same or better than those attained faced to face.

- The Pew/Chronicle of Higher Education Survey reported that
  - 51% of 1,055 college presidents said online and classroom courses have equal value.
  - 50% say that *most* students will take classes online within 10 years.

Dr. Ebersole also reported on an interview with Clayton Christensen, author of *The Innovative University* (2011), and quoted from the book:

- "Current trends favor online educators, particularly the for-profit ones." (p. 212)
- "The diploma mill stigma of online education is fading." (p. 215)
- "The most powerful mechanism of cost reduction [in higher education] is online learning."

However, after reviewing the positive signs, Dr. Ebersole reminded the audience that "Red Sky in the Morning, Sailor Take Warning." Among the warning signs he cited were that

- Only 9% of academic leaders believe that the quality of education by a for-profit is as good as by a non-profit.
- A third of academic leaders still think that online is inferior to face-to-face instruction.
- Only 29% of the public think online and classroom learning have equal value.
- The majority of online courses are still text-heavy, and many are not ADA-compliant.
- The military has a growing concern about the quality of the online courses the services are paying for, because expenses are up and completions are down.

Dr. Ebersole concluded that it is necessary to pay attention to what is best for all, not just our sector. He noted that it continues to be important to keep up with what the federal government is doing.

It is also necessary, he said, to recognize that the public cannot understand the differences between educational institutions and does not understand what quality looks like online ("bad behavior by one reflects on all"); thus it is necessary to educate the public." He added that getting people to change when they do not want to is very hard, and "we need to do a better job of talking and working together."

Finally, Dr. Ebersole summarized the Presidents Forum agenda for the coming year:

1. Work with states on common standards for oversight.
2. Look for ways to reduce the costs of higher education.
3. Advocate with the Department of Education especially with reference to financial aid, Title IV fraud, and student authentication. "We need to get out in front of this to avoid over-reaction." The Forum is planning a workshop.

The Forum concluded at 3:25 p.m.