

ICUS/Faculty Leadership
The Disjunction: Understanding the State and Higher Education Policy
Script for Webinar

Slide 1

- Welcome and thank you for viewing the webinar, *The Disjunction: Understanding Higher Education Policy at the State and Institutional Levels* hosted by the Council of Presidents Interinstitutional Committee on Undergraduate Studies.
- My name is Dr. Julie Garver and I am the Director of Policy and Academic Affairs for the Council of Presidents and I will be narrating the webinar today.
- Today's webinar will build on the first webinar which provided an overview of Washington's higher education ecosystem, the disruptors our sector faces and the responses by key influencers to the disruptors.
- The focus today is to provide context and information to inform a faculty-to-faculty dialogue around the sometimes-disjunctive responses between the institutions and the state to the same policy issues.

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- Washington higher education policy is influenced by perception and at times struggles to be informed by reality.
- National perceptions, other states, the media and personal experience influence the development of policy and its implementation in Washington.
- The goal of this webinar and the follow-up discussion on January 17 is to illustrate through data, reporting and research why too often we at colleges and universities feel like Olympia does not understand higher education and does not hear us. The hope is that the information shared today will inform your role as faculty leaders and the reasoning for where we are and where we will likely go in the future.

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- Nearly a decade since the official end of the Great Recession, higher education continues to experience the fallout of the "student loan crisis" both with regards to existing student loan debt and perceptions of loans in financing a college degree.
- This has led to an intense questioning and focus on cost and value. What is the cost of attaining a college degree and what is both the near term and long-term benefit.
- Further it has increased questions about the value of a college degree with an emphasis on the value of the baccalaureate degree.

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- As noted, the country is still experiencing the fallout of the Great Recession and student loans.
- Perceptions continue to be primarily informed by the national debt number in the trillions. This number is rarely clarified or unpacked to identify the types of institutions for which student debt is highest, student default rates and demographics. Furthermore, the leading cause for increased debt is perceived to be the rising costs of tuition at institutions.
- The reality paints a different and more nuanced picture around student debt and costs at institutions, at least in Washington. Where the costs over the last twenty years have remained relatively flat. Growth has come as institutions have changed their pedagogy and service to students, often led by the passage of legislation that requires more advising, counselors and other key roles on campus.
- Nationally, the average cumulative debt for bachelor's degree recipients at public, four-year institutions in 2017-18 was \$27,200.
- Other national trends include:
 - The rate of growth of outstanding debt is slowing.
 - Total annual borrowing has declined for 8 consecutive years, from 1998-1999 to 2018-19.
 - Half of the dollars and 30% of the borrowers in repayment are in income-based repayment plans.
 - Borrowers age 60 and over have increased 1,256% since 2004. Borrowers between the ages of 30-39 have the largest amount of student debt. The largest age group owing student debt are borrowers under the age of 30.
 - Borrowing patterns differ significantly across racial and ethnic groups. Looking at cumulative debt levels for 2015-16 Bachelor's degree recipients:
 - Students who identify as Asian are the largest race/ethnicity group with no debt; students who identify as Black are the smallest race/ethnicity group with no debt.
 - 64% of students who identify as Black had cumulative debt of \$20,000 or higher followed by 47% students who identify as White; 38%

students who identify as Latina/o; and 34% of students who identify as Asian

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- The reality in Washington differs from common perceptions and national statistics. This creates a disconnect because even though messaging at the national level is out of proportion with our state's reality it is the driver, the headline maker for state-level decision making.
- Since 2014, our sector has seen a rise in the percent of students with no debt at graduation and a decline in the average debt owed.
- 52% of the Class of 2018 graduated from a WA baccalaureate degree-granting institution with no student loan debt.
- The average undergraduate student loan debt in WA was \$23,524.
- WA continues to rank among the top ten states for least debt among low-income students; we now rank 6th in the nation for low student debt.
- Most of Washington's public baccalaureate institutions are in the top 200 lowest state public institutions for debt.
- Cumulatively the three-year student loan default rate for graduates from WA's public four-year institutions is 5.2%; the national average is 10.1%.

Slides 6 and 7

- Higher education nationally and in Washington continue to experience a time where the value of a college degree is under scrutiny.
- Headlines often note good jobs exist that pay without a bachelor's degree and ask if college is worth it? Yet headlines don't provide the details that the research unveils.
- In recent years there has been a loss of confidence in a four-year degree: In 2017 a poll by NBC News and the Wall Street Journal found that 49% of Americans agreed with the statement that a four-year degree is worth the cost.... While 47% said that the degree is not worth the cost.
- This is a change from 2013 when a similar question was posed by a CNBC survey in which 53% thought it was worth the cost and 40% said it was not. Among 18-34-year-old 39% in 2017 said a four-year degree was worth the cost, while 57%

disagreed, in 2013 those numbers were flipped, 56% to 38%.

- Recruiting site Glassdoor recently published a list of companies no longer requiring a college degree including Google, Apple, and Ernst & Young. The article, despite the headline, went on to say that “these companies are looking at those with non-traditional education or a high school diploma...and academic qualifications will still be taken into account and indeed remain an important consideration when assessing candidates as a whole, but will no longer act as a barrier to getting a foot in the door”.
- 99% of jobs created since the Great Recession have gone to workers with at least some college education. This “some college” has underscored in Washington the perception by state leaders that not everyone needs a four-year degree. Yet when you dive into the numbers you realize the new gateway degree is the baccalaureate degree. As illustrated.
- By 2018, the national economy created 46.8 million openings. Nearly two-thirds of these 46.8 million jobs - some 63%- required workers with at least some college education.
- A breakdown of the 46.8 million jobs showed that 10 percent were open to master’s degree or higher, 24% with bachelor’s degrees, 12% with Associate degree, 17% with some college no degree and 38% with a high school diploma or dropout.
- Further, projections of educational demand through 2018 estimate that 63% of new and replacement jobs in the future will require some college or better, while 72% of this subset will require a bachelor’s degree or better.
- When you look at WA specific information you find that in our state a credential beyond high school is needed and arguably a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- According to the WA Roundtable, demand for workers with postsecondary credentials is higher than it has ever been. A credential including a degree, apprenticeship or certificate is essential for anyone who wants a job that offers a good salary and advancement opportunities.
- There are 740,000 projected job openings by 2021 in Washington.
- Dig a little deeper and according to the WA Roundtable in WA 63% of career job openings will be filled by workers with bachelor’s degrees or higher, compared to 11% by workers with two-year degrees.

- Ultimately this leads to the disconnect in that the stump speeches at the state level do not accurately portray the data.

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- Washingtonians are a critical influencer on higher education policy and the perceptions of elected officials, state agencies, organizations, associations and local boards. This includes entities such as voters, parents, teachers, labor, students and businesses.
- A strength of Washington is the public access Washingtonians have to policymakers and the process of developing policy through the bill process and rule-making process at the state level as well as local processes through boards and organizations.
- The following slides provide insight into recent perceptions of Washington Voters around education and higher education in particular.
- In October of this year a survey was completed of Washington Voters.
- The survey reflects the summary of perceptions and views of 600 interviews with Washington voters likely to participate in the November 2020 election.
- The survey was conducted via landline and cell phones with a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 4 percent at the 95% confidence interval; plus, or minus 5.7% for half-samples.
- The findings provide both a snapshot of current perceptions of higher education and the opportunity to recognize changes in perception over time.

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- When asked to rank how important benefits that education beyond high school can provide, voters ranked helping students from low-income backgrounds get the skills they need to succeed as adults the highest compared to helping people get jobs that provide benefits like health insurance and retirement plans. Please note the bright green line on this slide and the following slides combines the Extremely and Very Important responses.

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- When asked to rank how important benefits that education beyond high school can provide, voters ranked providing a talent pool for employers as less important.

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- And overall the importance of providing a talent pool for employers has declined since last year

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- Costs and value of some form of education post-high school are generally understood as necessary for success by voters.

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- However, the form of post-high school education does not translate to a college degree.

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- And this view has shifted in recent years, declining by 37% since 2013.

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- Access and cost are also drivers for dual credit among voters. When asked to rank the importance of approaches for increasing the number of Washington students enrolled in educational programs beyond high school dual credit ranked the highest. The bright green line combines the Extremely and Very Important responses.

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- Of less importance is hiring more counselors and free in-state tuition.

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- With a slight gain in the importance of support for programs that help people complete their degrees

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- Perception and reality and the voice of influencers are critical to the alignment or misalignment within a policy context.
- This creates the disjunction. Let's explore how that disjunction looks in Washington higher education policy.

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- To begin it is important that we have a shared understanding of the higher education policy influencers in Washington.
- In addition to Washingtonians, state level higher education policy is developed and implemented by a range of entities.
- There are three primary influencers on higher education policy in Washington: (1) elected officials, (2) state agencies and (3) other which includes associations, business, and organizations.
- In Washington, elected officials are not elected as a ticket. Each office is elected separately creating an outcome of independent priorities and goals that may be loosely connected along political party priorities.
- There are five major elected officials that influence higher education policy in Washington. The most influential are the Governor and the Legislature.
- In addition, the Attorney General, Secretary of State and most recently the Lieutenant Governor who has prioritized higher education policy and the Superintendent of Instruction given the growing interest in the transition from K-12 to higher education.
- Another group of higher education policy influencers at the state level includes associations, business and organizations. This includes a range of organizations and associations that represent a sector, a group within a sector or are focused on a goal or theme related to education. It is an alphabet soup of entities including but not limited to the Council of Presidents, Independent Colleges of Washington, Joint Transfer Council, Intercollege Relations Commission, Washington Council for High School-College Relations, College Success Foundation, College Promise Coalition, Washington Roundtable, Association of Washington Businesses, Washington STEM, Association of Washington Principals, Washington Education Association and many more.

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- There are multiple state agencies in Washington, each with a focus on an area of state government.
- Among the state agencies there are six state agencies that directly influence higher education policy in Washington.

- Washington Student Achievement Council provides strategic planning, oversight, advocacy and program administration to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. WSAC is led by a 9-member council that includes representatives from the Council of Presidents, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Independent Colleges of Washington, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and five citizens including a current student appointed by the Governor.
 - State Board for Community and Technical Colleges advocates, coordinates and directs Washington state's system of 34 public community and technical colleges. SBCTC is led by a 9-member governor-appointed board.
 - Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board is committed to sustaining Washington's economic vitality through a highly skilled workforce, is an active and effective partner of labor, business and government leaders and shapes strategies to create and sustain a high-skill, high-wage economy. The Workforce Board is led by a 9-member, Governor-appointed board from business, labor and government
 - Professional Educators and Standards Board ensures that Washington's educator workforce is composed of highly effective, professional educators who meet the diverse needs of schools and districts. PESB is led by a 12-member board appointed by the Governor of which a majority are practicing educators.
 - Office of the Superintendent of Instruction, also known as OSPI, is the primary agency charged with overseeing public K-12 education in Washington.
 - State Board of Education provides transparent leadership in K-12 education policymaking; effective oversight of schools serving Washington K-12 students; and, assertive advocacy for student personal growth and success. These three areas of responsibility support a system that personalizes learning for each student and values diverse cultures, abilities, and learning styles. SBE is led by a 16-member Board that includes seven members appointed by the Governor, 5 members filled through elections by Washington state public school board directors, one private school member, two student representatives and the Superintendent of Instruction.
- The agencies develop policy that reflects the priorities of the Governor or their elected leader in the case of OSPI and the experience and thinking of the Board members within the vision, mission and scope of the agency.
 - Within this context it is worth noting that our sector, the public baccalaureates are represented on only the WSAC Council. Other education partners are represented on multiple education agencies, such as OSPI and SBCTC.

- This often drives the perception that our sector is not collaborative in our work, which is not the reality. Institutions are committed and proactive in engaging with each other and as a sector through the Council of Presidents. At the institutional level, Boards of Trustees and Regents are the connection between industry and citizens in leading our public institutions.
- Most of these entities have advocates in Olympia and coordinate responses from stakeholders that result in feedback about proposed policy or ideas or changes to current policy.
- Washington, relative to other states, is decentralized and informal with regards to the structure of higher education. There is strong local control governance in Washington.
- Influencing the influencers and being influenced are individual constituents as well as 253 school districts with locally elected boards and 50 public and private baccalaureate and community and technical colleges with local boards of trustees and regents.
- All of which are influencing and influenced by other entities such as unions, student associations, faculty senates, counties, cities, etc.

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- There are three major policy drivers in Washington: (1) Costs which includes costs to student and families, costs to taxpayers, institutional costs and costs to the economy, (2) Completion which includes graduation, time to degree, completion of a credential, retention and employment post-graduation and (3) Access which includes access to whom and to what.
- Each driver is influenced by a range of considerations or mechanisms that impact the driver including the type of fiscal payment, time, impact and participation.
- The lens by which a policymaker or stakeholder views the considerations within the drivers or a combination of considerations that combine drivers leads to the state-level policy solutions we experience in higher education.

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- In Washington this has resulted in direct impacts to higher education curriculum and pedagogy.
- Acceleration to a credential continues to be a constant drumbeat from early learning through graduate/professional school. Some of the solutions that have been advanced include:
 - A 2016 legislatively established Accelerated Degree work group to look at early completion of credentials.
 - High Schools students earning Associates while in high school through Running Start
 - The growth and expansion of dual credit in K-12 leading to mandated credit awarding policies
 - The growth of Bachelor of Applied Science degrees at the community and technical colleges.
- The types of credentialing and modes are changing without at times contextualizing outcomes for students, larger conversations about benefits and challenges, and pathways and long-term impacts.
 - Apprenticeships offered to students while in high school
 - Career Connected Learning
 - Push for non-baccalaureate pathways by state and local leaders
 - Push for CTE in K-12
 - Push Guided pathways work in the transfer system potential impacts for transfer
 - Push for more and more academic credit for prior learning
 - High Schools and even Middle School delivering college courses

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- Within this context it is worth noting:
 - K-12 is increasingly driving intentionally and unintentionally higher education policy
 - The strong technology economy in the state impacts the perceptions of STEM and non-STEM
 - We are in a plateau for both transfer and high school students that will likely last into the early or mid- 2020s.
 - Strong current of questioning of the value and relevancy of a baccalaureate degree.

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- The results can be seen in the initiatives pursued and implemented.
- Changes to curriculum and pedagogy such as acceleration, new types of credentialing and the push towards a job focused education are perceived solutions to the changes in demographics, costs and return on investment.

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- Using the lens of the primary state level policy drivers in Washington, we can see a difference in both the considerations and solutions.
- For example, considerations around cost may include cost of attendance, state funding levels and default rates.

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- At the same time Washington's public baccalaureate institutions are engaged in directly addressing the same drivers and similar considerations in higher education.
- A focus on the whole student both in and outside the classroom has emerged across the sector. Some of the solutions that have been advanced at the institutional level include:
 - Institutional investment in need-based financial aid programs
 - Financial literacy tools and engagement
 - Concerted awareness of equity and the impact on different student populations
 - A view of the whole student including academics and non-academic factors
 - Reduction of barriers and a simplification of processes to be student-centered
- A dynamism around degree offerings, modes and pedagogy at the institutional level. This includes:
 - Shaping general education to meet the goals and needs of students and the mission of the institution addressing the question what students do who earn a bachelor knowledge should know
 - Approaching a baccalaureate degree through the lens of a theme or solution that may be addressed through a multi-disciplinary lens narrowing down to a specific major
 - Embedded high impact programs across the curriculum.

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- An eye to beyond graduation and the attainment of a degree. How does an institution make the most of the time a student spends with a college or university. This may include:
 - Engagement with business and industry
 - Advising
 - Applied pedagogy and experiences.

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- Within this context it is worth noting:
 - Institutions continue to view these changes through the human development perspective focusing on best fit, a student's educational goals and readiness.
 - Institutions continue to advocate for learning and quality rather than information acquisition only.
 - Institutions strongly support changes that lead to student success and are clear for students to understand and implement

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- The results can be seen in the initiatives pursued and implemented.
- Changes to curriculum and pedagogy, new types of credentials, wrap around student supports and post-graduation skill building.

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- Overall what is illustrated is the disjunction between the state and institutions even when the drivers are the same and the considerations are similar, the solutions are different. This is especially when we note the key takeaways from the state and the institutional context.

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- Thank you for listening to the webinar
- We hope that the webinar provided an opportunity to identify areas in which you want to explore further and questions you may want to pose about the state landscape with faculty peers.
- If you have questions or identified areas in advance, I welcome them prior to the discussion.
- We look forward to a peer-to-peer discussion on January 17.