

**Delaware College Access Network (DE-CAN)
Higher Education Subcommittee Recommendations**

**“Increasing the number of Delawareans who Pursue and Complete
Postsecondary Education”**

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(Chair, DE-CAN Higher Education Subcommittee)

On Behalf of DE-CAN Higher Education Subcommittee Members

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Dr. Kim Joyce	Delaware Technical and Community College
Maureen Laffey	Delaware Higher Education Commission
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January 21, 2010

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A Nation’s and State’s Agenda

President Barack Obama has established two goals relating to post-secondary education. First, by 2020, he wants America to reclaim its position as #1 in the world in the percent of population that has a college degree. Second, he wants every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. *Note: Goals cited above were extracted from President Obama’s address to a Joint session of Congress, Feb. 24, 2009).* These goals reflect Delaware College Access Network (DE-CAN) members’ fundamental belief that gaining additional education is the key to the nation’s future as well as Delaware’s. To achieve these goals, each state, each year, must increase the number of students who are prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and attend and complete postsecondary and licensure institutions’ academic requirements.

Subcommittee’s Charge

To increase Delaware students’ high school graduation rates and their college enrollment, retention and graduation rates, continued focus should be undertaken by members of Delaware’s P-20 Council and Delaware’s College Access Network (DE-CAN). Members of Delaware’s College Access Network’s Higher Education Subcommittee were charged by Dr. Joseph Pika, Chair of DE-CAN, to recommend practices, programs, and policies that have highest potential to increase Delaware students’ access to Delaware’s two- and four- year institutions of higher education, and their rates of enrollment, retention and persistence to degree completion. The members are:

Dr. Rebecca Fox-Lykens, Director- Center for Teaching and Learning, Delaware State University;
Dr. Kim Joyce, Assistant Vice President for Education Support -Delaware Technical and
Community College;
Maureen Laffey, Director- Delaware Higher Education Commission;
Maryann Matera, Advisor-Goldey- Beacom College;
Mary-Alice Ozechoski, Dean of Students- Wesley College;
Dennis Rozumalski, Education Associate – Delaware Department of Education;
Dr. Angela Suchanic, Assistant Vice President - Wilmington University; and
Dr. Terry Whittaker, Assistant Provost for Student Diversity and Success -University of Delaware
(Chair, Higher Education Subcommittee)

This report provides our guiding beliefs, definitions for college-readiness, access, retention/persistence, graduation, and process and procedure for the formulation of recommendations. We addressed our charge by recommending action strategies and citing anticipated overarching outcomes. Our recommendations are focused on the pre-school through postsecondary education continuum (P-20 system). Members of the subcommittee assert that every level of the education sector are intra-

connected and must work at common purposes to assure the success of the entire system. To convey our assertion, we have listed our recommendations under four Initiative categories: (#1) College Assess, Retention, and Success Initiative; (#2) Pre-Collegiate Outreach Initiative; (#3) Middle School Initiative; (#4) State-level Initiative.

Delaware Institutions of Higher Education chief academic affairs officers (i.e. Provost or Vice President) have endorsed recommendations under categories (#1) College Assess, Retention and Success Initiative. Delaware School Districts' superintendents and principals will be asked to endorse category (#2) Middle School Initiative. The Governor or his designee and chairs of state-wide councils/coalitions will be asked to endorse recommendations listed under category (#3).

Subcommittee's Guiding Beliefs

Members of the Higher Education Subcommittee believe:

- Business and community leaders, and educators and policy-makers of the entire educational system—from pre-school to postsecondary education – should continue to work collectively, collaboratively, and expeditiously to prepare and enable all Delaware students to become successful learners and workers at high levels of achievements.
- Preparation for students' readiness in college and the workforce must begin in pre-kindergarten and continue throughout grade 12.
- Students need a comparable level of readiness in English (especially in reading) and mathematics to succeed in college-level courses without remediation and to enter workforce training programs to learn job-specific skills. (Note: Our belief is validated by an ACT empirical study on college and workplace readiness conducted in 2006).
- It is the responsibility of Delaware postsecondary administrators/educators to provide higher education opportunities for Delawareans who desire to enroll in in-state colleges and universities. Delaware's postsecondary administrators/educators should also be asked to provide services that aid students' efforts to succeed in their quest to earn a postsecondary education certificate or degree.

Definitions: College-readiness, Access, Retention/Persistence, and Graduation

Members of the Higher Education Subcommittee set forth the following definitions that should be adopted as uniform state-wide definitions:

- **College Readiness:** A student's possession (via official documentation) of academic or cognitive competencies and demonstration of minimum nonacademic or non-cognitive skills required for admission and success in his or her postsecondary institution of choice first year required credit bearing, non-remedial courses; especially in English, mathematics, and sciences courses.
- **Access:** A student's achievement of standards required for admission and entrance into his or her postsecondary institution of choice, including possession of financial resources required for continued progression to graduation.
- **Retention/Persistence:** A student's progression, in good academic standing, each semester, until degree completion.

- **Graduation:** Official confirmation of a student’s completion of award requirements. Many universities and colleges report time-to-degree completion in time slots of three years (community colleges) and six years (baccalaureate colleges and universities) for federal purposes.

Higher Education Subcommittee’s Recommendation Process/Procedure

Members of the DE-CAN Higher Education Subcommittee conducted a gap/need analysis to formulate action recommendations by:

- Comparing members’ current institutional practices and policies to assess systemic practices and policies.
- Comparing institutional policies and practices among recommendations cited in white papers and reports to determine gaps/needs to address.
- Recommending policies and practices that could be administered and implemented at/by members’ institutions.
- Recommending policies and practices that have the highest potential to increase students’ access, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.
- Revising recommendations in response to each subcommittee members’ chief academic affairs officers’ input and additional input from members of the DE-CAN Higher Education Subcommittee prior to the final report.

Higher Education Subcommittee’s Action Recommendations

Members of Delaware College Access Network’s (DE-CAN) Higher Education Subcommittee, individually and collectively, are committed to working collaboratively with other P-20 subcommittees to assist Delaware students in developing competencies and skills required for college and workplace readiness and success.

We are also committed to assisting DE-CAN in accomplishing its mission of strengthening the preparation of all Delaware public school students to ensure their college readiness and ability to obtain a certificate or degree from two and four-year colleges, as well as succeed in work readiness programs.

Category I: College Assess, Retention and Success Initiative

On January 7, 2010, during a joint meeting with the Chair of DE-CAN and members of DE-CAN Higher Education Subcommittee, Provosts and Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs from Delaware State University, Delaware Technical and Community College, Wesley College, Wilmington University, and University of Delaware endorsed the College Assess, Retention and Success Initiative recommendations under the four subtitles:

Access

A1. The Institutions of Higher Education will post their admissions and financial aid information on their institutional websites, through links on the DHEC website, and through links on community organization websites.

A2. The Institutions of Higher Education will expand outreach on college attendance through presentations and other activities involving middle schools and community organizations.

A3. The Institutions of Higher Education will participate in events such as those sponsored by Delaware Association of Student Financial Aid Administrations (DASFAA) intended to increase student and family understanding of admissions and financial aid processes.

A4. The Institutions of Higher Education will actively seek to reenroll individuals who have stopped out or dropped out for non-academic reasons and support them in completion of their degrees.

Transition

T1. In collaboration with the school districts, the Institutions of Higher Education will seek ways to strengthen the transition from high school to college through improved communication of expectations and alignment of curricula.

T2. In collaboration with the Department of Education and school districts, the Institutions of Higher Education will explore the feasibility of constructing an electronic system to support career exploration and portfolio development for Delaware students from middle school through college.

T3. The Institutions of Higher Education will continue to review and assess, and if indicated, enhance and expand their orientation and freshmen year experience programs.

Retention

R1. The Institutions of Higher Education will continue to review and assess, and if indicated, create or enhance early warning systems and intervention processes.

R2. The Institutions of Higher Education will promote partnerships between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to support students' academic success.

R3. The Institutions of Higher Education will use nationally normed survey instrument(s) such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and/or Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) to identify and address retention-related issues.

R4. The Institutions of Higher Education will identify and implement strategies to increase faculty engagement in student success initiatives.

Information Sharing

I1. The Provosts will share annually with each other their best practices in access, transition, and retention. Campus representatives with responsibility for access, transition, and/or retention may be invited to participate. The Provosts may identify and share specific initiatives with other audiences such as high school counselors.

Category 2: Middle School Initiatives

Additionally, members of the DE-CAN Higher Education Subcommittee recommend continued implementation and establishment of the following practices, programs, and policies throughout the pre-kindergarten to middle school education continuum:

1. School districts' Superintendents, principals, and teachers should advocate for and support a 100% high school graduation and college or workforce-readiness rates for *EVERY* child who enrolls in the first grade.
2. Delaware Department of Education and school districts should establish and disseminate definitions and descriptions of grade-level college and workplace readiness standards that are clear and transparent throughout school districts and accessible by all Delaware citizens and community groups. Special efforts should be administered to disseminate information to parents/guardians of elementary and middle school students, especially low socio-economic families.
3. Dissemination of academic and non-academic criteria for college and workplace readiness should start earlier--preferably, during the elementary and middle school years. Kindergarten to twelfth grade counselors and teachers should provide students with on-going advisement and assistance related to college and workplace readiness.
4. Delaware Department of Education and the P-20 Council should continue to advocate for implementation of Vision 2015 principles and recommendations in schools. The Department and Council should also strive to implement the principles and recommendations state-wide in every school.
5. Superintendents of Delaware school districts, in partnership with Delaware's postsecondary education administrators and business leaders, should provide incentives to encourage K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions to formally and strategically partner with community organizations (such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, YMCAs and YWCAs, neighborhood community centers, 4-H clubs, Delaware Mentor Council, and other organizations). These incentives should also assist in the development of students' academic and non-academic skills for college and workplace readiness.
6. Delaware postsecondary institutions' and school districts' administrators and educators should continue to collaborate and establish aligned grade-level common core course (e.g. English, math, and science) standards and contents in schools' curricular.

Category 3: State-level Initiative

Furthermore, at the State-level, the following state-wide practices, programs, and policies should be administered:

7. Delaware Department of Education should create and administer a state-level year-round pre-collegiate program development fund. Pre-collegiate program development funds could be appropriated by the State Legislature to the Department of Education and allocated competitively to Delaware postsecondary institutions.
8. Governor Jack Markell and legislators should continue providing incentives for the Delaware Department of Education, the P-20 Council and other coalitions so they can establish and enact state-wide K-12 curricular and core course contents alignments with Delaware colleges' freshman core non-remedial credit bearing courses' expectations. Instructional training, establishment and assessment of core grade level learning goals (both for academic content knowledge and non-academic competencies) should reflect these alignments. Also, implementation of practices designed to help students successfully transition from pre-kindergarten to completion of postsecondary institutions' first year core course requirements and/or workplace demands should reflect these alignments.
9. A state-wide campaign could be undertaken in the schools and community to assure parents/guardians that the cost of higher education will be within reach if their children successfully complete the minimum requirements for high school graduation and demonstrates that they can succeed in college.
10. Delaware Department of Education should continue designing and implementing a state-wide P-20 and career longitudinal data systems that track students' progress and foster continuous improvement during K-12 matriculation and transitions between high school and college or the workplace. Data collected could be used to evaluate and examine practices and policies from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 so that appropriate adjustments can be made to support high achievement for all students.

Anticipated Overarching Outcomes of Recommendation Implementations

Enactment and implementation of practices, programs, and policies recommended in this report could result in: (1.) increased numbers of Delaware high school graduates who are admitted to 2-year and 4-year degree programs and who are prepared to succeed; and (2.) improved retention and persistence to graduation rates among Delaware students pursuing postsecondary education certificates or degrees.

Next Steps

Upon approval of the DE-CAN Committee, Dr. Joseph Pika, Chair of DE-CAN will ask Superintendents of Delaware school districts' and Principals to endorse recommendations listed under category (#2) Middle School Initiative. Dr. Pika will also ask the Governor or his designee and chairs of state-wide councils/coalitions to endorse recommendations listed under category (#3) State-level initiative.

(1/21/10)

