

March 19, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: State Systems Transformation Co-creation Participation

Background

In October 2013, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education responded to a "Request for Letters of Interest from State Postsecondary Education Systems" of The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Through this process the Postsecondary Success team of the Foundation was seeking a small set of leading state systems (systems of four-year institutions and those with both four-year and two-year institutions) to partner in long-term transformation work. Through its work with key postsecondary education leaders over the past year, the Foundation has determined state systems have arisen as one key entry point to enable students—especially low income or first generation students—to graduate at higher rates, with meaningful degrees and certificates, and at an affordable price.

Through this request for letters of interest, the foundation hoped to achieve five things: (1) Identify the level of interest in this type of work; (2) Better understand where the field is in terms of specific ideas, plans and current work in support of the transformation they seek; (3) Refine their hypotheses about the elements needed for transformation; (4) Sharpen their understanding of what supports would best aid state systems; (5) Select a set of systems that would help the foundation co-create the goals, processes, and supports for state system transformation, and with this set engage in deeper due diligence to understand the potential for longer-term partnership with the foundation.

Forty letters of interest were considered over a two month window and in late January Utah was notified that we were selected as one of twelve early adopter systems and a co-creation participant. The other state systems that were selected are California, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. We signed our Grant Agreement on March 11, 2014 and will be the recipient of \$200,035 which will be used to facilitate the collaboration process through December 2014.

Issue

The State Systems Transformation co-creation project is a development and implementation process. It will be collaborative both in execution and in design. The Foundation and consultant will initiate the work, but

direction and activities will be driven largely by the participating systems and tailored to the individual needs of each system.

This project is structured in two phases: (1) Vision and Alignment, followed by (2) Blueprint and Prototyping:

Vision and Alignment (March through May)

1. Working with the consultant and the Foundation, refine and complete a set of pre-workshop templates, diagnostics, and interviews (readiness, strategy and work inventory, capacity, etc.).
2. The leadership team will participate in a two-day co-creation workshop with the other state systems to be held May 5-6, 2014 in Washington D.C.
3. Develop a plan of activities specific to our system to carry out over the remaining portion of the grant period.

Blueprint and Prototyping (June through December)

1. Execute the plan created during the "Vision and Alignment" phase.
2. Assist the Foundation and consultant in understanding implementation and scale issues identified during stakeholder engagement and prototyping of selected solution/program/intervention. These issues may include, among others: resources and allocation, policy, change management, technology and data platforms.
3. Participate through staff representation in various roundtables, virtual and in-person, based on role and issue affinity.
4. Provide final vetting and feedback on components of transformation (vision, design principles, end state scenarios, processes, etc.).
5. Communicate reflection on process, project, and continuation/sustainability of transformation work.

The core leadership team is comprised of the Commissioner, Elizabeth Hitch, Associate Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, and Melissa Miller Kincart, Assistant Commissioner for Outreach and Access who will work as the Project Liaison. As the process moves forward, other key staff and institutional representatives may be selected to participate in a larger leadership team or working group.

In our proposal we outlined three pieces of work that we believe will significantly impact the 66% by 2020 goal, which include:

1. Explore and if feasible implement curriculum-based predictive analytics system-wide to improve student advising with regard to course selection, course persistence, and changes in academic major based on student performance and interest. This will help students take more credits per semester and ensure that they are taking the right credits.
2. Redefine, simplify and individualize math pathways and requirements system-wide to more effectively meet students' quantitative literacy (QL) needs. This would include a realignment of QL in light of the Utah Common Core Standards, and would address the gap in math skills created by state graduation requirements and exacerbated by Local Education Agency autonomy in granting high school diplomas using alternative math requirements.
3. Address the 27% of Utahns with "some college, no degree." To help meet the 66% goal, it makes sense to re-engage adult learners. While this is happening piecemeal and at a small scale across the system now, a system-wide effort could increase efficiency and better serve students who are interested in returning but do not know where or how to start.

Since the time of submission, we have revisited a conversation we started about a year ago at the system and Chief Student Services Officer level regarding the development and use of a common Utah college application similar to the system used by the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board. Our interest in this undertaking was sparked again this November, as Utah joined The American College Application Campaign (ACAC) when a number of barriers and issues were identified that could be improved through a unified system.

We are pleased to have been selected to participate in this collaborative development and implementation process with peer state systems, the Foundation staff, and consultants, as we strive to advance both statewide and at institutional levels in our efforts to improve student access and success.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only, no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to read and take note of the information memorandum, and note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Participation and Completion strategic objectives.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/MMK