

Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education

Follow-up Report
June 2013

Office of Performance Evaluations
Idaho Legislature



Report 13-10F

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Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education

Follow-up Report

Executive Summary

We released our report *Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education* in January 2012 to address legislative concerns about the low number of Idaho's citizens completing postsecondary education. Although the Board of Education had set a goal that 60 percent of adults between the ages of 25 and 34 will have a college degree or certificate by the year 2020, we found that the board lacked the data to accurately establish a baseline of current education levels. We also found that the Department of Labor's projections indicate that less than one-third of Idaho jobs will require some type of postsecondary education by 2018. Our report provided a series of recommendations that will more closely align the board's goal with employment projections, in part by asking policymakers to consider developing a coordinated, long-term strategy to link education goals and workforce needs.

We recommended that the Department of Education help improve college access by increasing student counselors and creating a statewide counselor coordinator position. We also recommended that the Board of Education work with the Legislature to review Idaho's current scholarship structure and find ways to support more need-based scholarships.

In this follow-up review, we found that the Board of Education and the Department of Labor have begun to make progress in implementing our recommendations. The Department of Education has not implemented our recommendations, citing other efforts it believes may be more effective. The responses from the Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Department of Labor are included in this report.

Acknowledgements

We appreciate the assistance of the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Department of Labor. Amy Lorenzo of the Office of Performance Evaluations conducted this study, Bryon Welch performed the quality control review, and Margaret Campbell was the copy editor and desktop publisher.

Overview

In our initial report, we found that barriers to postsecondary education generally fell into the areas of access, academic readiness, and affordability. We also found that policymakers were at a crossroads in making decisions on how and when to focus on postsecondary education goals in conjunction with employment goals.

Our report highlighted several key findings:

- Reducing barriers to postsecondary education will require better access and affordability for Idaho students.
- More comprehensive data will allow the Board of Education to establish an accurate baseline of current education levels in Idaho.
- Successfully linking education and employment will depend on a coordinated, long-term strategy.

We made nine recommendations to the Board of Education, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and the Legislature. This follow-up review assesses the implementation status of each recommendation.

Status of Recommendations

We assessed the status of recommendations within four categories:

- **Implemented:** The agency has measurably met the recommendation's intent.
- **Addressed:** The agency has taken an approach that diverged from the recommendation but has still met the recommendation's intent.
- **In process:** The agency has begun to measurably address the recommendation's intent.
- **Not implemented:** The agency has not begun to measurably address the recommendation's intent.

Our review of implementation efforts found that the Board of Education and the Department of Labor have begun to address our recommendations:

- One recommendation has been implemented.
- Four recommendations are in process.
- Four recommendations have not been implemented.

School Counselors

Recommendation 2.1: *The Department of Education should have a dedicated position to serve as a statewide K–12 counselor coordinator. This person would spearhead communication efforts at the state level and coordinate training for all school counselors across the state, particularly related to college and career information.*

In our initial report, we found that Idaho lacked a statewide position to help ensure school counselors throughout the state received relevant and timely college and career information for students. A state-level counselor coordinator could provide support and guidance to all K–12 counselors, as well as be a liaison between districts and the Department of Education in two ways: (1) communicate college and career information accurately and timely, and (2) represent counselors at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

According to Department of Education officials, the responsibility for providing school counselors with career and college information should not fall to one person. Rather, department officials believe this responsibility should be shared. The department has created a college and career readiness program to coordinate communication efforts among parents, teachers, administrators, and students.

Through its College Access Challenge Grant, the Board of Education is taking some steps to provide training to school counselors. Using the Idaho Digital Learning Academy, counselors will have access to coordinated, consistent training for the next two years. In 2013, which was the first year the training was offered, 52 counselors enrolled and 33 passed. The second round of training, which began in April, has 41 counselors enrolled. According to board officials, future use of the training resource will depend on district priorities and budget restrictions.

Status: This recommendation is **not implemented**.

Recommendation 2.2: *The Department of Education should take steps to decrease the student-to-counselor ratio, particularly for those positions that provide education and career counseling.*

In academic year 2009–2010, Idaho’s student-to-counselor ratio was 447:1. Although this ratio was slightly below the national average of 459:1, it was nearly double the American School Counselor Association’s recommendation of 250:1. In our survey of school counselors, approximately half of the respondents indicated they spent 25 percent or less of their time counseling students on college readiness and college access. A lower student-to-counselor ratio may assist counselors in spending more time advising students on issues such as postsecondary education and career readiness.

Officials at the Department of Education believe that creating a college-going culture should be the responsibility of all educators in a school, not one person. In light of limited resources, the department suggests other measures to foster this belief, such as teachers and staff wearing their college sweatshirt each Friday.

During the 2013 legislative session, Senate Bill 1085 was introduced. It would have required that schools provide a minimum of one school counselor for every 325 enrolled students. The bill was referred to the Senate Education Committee but was not heard further.

Although not directly linked to school counselors, the Board of Education is currently piloting a near-peer mentoring project in three schools. The project targets low-income and first generation students, using recent college graduates as mentors to students. At the completion of the pilot, the board plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and assess whether it could be incorporated into other school districts.

Status: This recommendation is **not implemented**.

Scholarships and Outreach

Recommendation 3.1: *The State Board of Education should work with the Legislature to review the current appropriations for need-based scholarships and consider reallocating funds from merit-based scholarships or creating new scholarships that are primarily need based. (Note: As the board implements recommendation 4.3, outcome data will assist in implementing this recommendation.)*

Need-based scholarships, which are awards given to students primarily based on economic need, are recognized as one of the most effective ways to increase the number of students going to college. According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), Idaho's neighboring states vary in the amount of state-sponsored, need-based aid they provide for students. At \$63 per full-time equivalent, WICHE ranks Idaho very low compared with neighboring states and the national average. Of these states, only Wyoming spent less than Idaho in need-based aid per full-time equivalent student.

At the time of our initial report release, Idaho had several state-sponsored scholarships for students based on academic achievement in high school. These scholarships included the Opportunity Scholarship, the Promise Scholarships, and the Freedom Scholarship. For fiscal year 2012, the Legislature appropriated \$7.6 million from the general fund to all scholarships programs.¹

¹ For fiscal year 2013, the Legislature appropriated \$7.1 million to fund scholarship programs.

Merit-based scholarships are awards given to students based on academic achievement. Research has shown that students who receive merit-based scholarships can often afford to attend college wherever they choose; scholarship funding based on merit is often highly correlated with income. We found that for those students with a financial need, an increase in need-based scholarships such as the Opportunity Scholarship, which has both merit-based and need-based components, would enable more high school graduates to pursue a postsecondary education.

After the release of our report, the board created a committee to review Idaho's funding structure of state scholarships and consider ways to most effectively use state dollars. At a board meeting in October 2012, the committee recommended consolidating the state's scholarship program into three tiers of scholarships that equaled the 12 scholarships already in place. The board unanimously accepted the committee's recommendations and moved to draft legislation that amends Idaho Code to reflect the new structure.

During the 2013 legislative session, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 1027, which significantly reorganized the state's scholarship program. The legislation repealed several existing scholarship programs and reorganized the Opportunity Scholarship to increase its effectiveness and efficiency. According to Board of Education officials, the redesign will "target the right students and provide the right money."

The reorganization will be phased in over the next two fiscal years; students who currently receive one of the eliminated scholarships will continue to receive the scholarship as long as they meet eligibility requirements and the funding is available. As part of the rule-making process, the board will further define the merit-to-need-based ratio and the minimum grade point average required for scholarship eligibility. The scholarship committee plans to develop rules this summer and present them to the board for approval. Once approved by the board, the rules will be presented to the Legislature during the 2014 legislative session.

Status: This recommendation is **implemented**.

Recommendation 3.2: *In light of Idaho's significant reliance on both federal and foundation support to further its postsecondary education goal, the State Board of Education should work with the Legislature to create a strategy to financially sustain the statewide outreach programs for increasing college access in the absence of external financial resources.*

State-funded, sustainable efforts designed to increase a student's college readiness and college access will improve Idaho's ability to provide access and outreach services. In our initial report, we found numerous examples of outreach efforts designed to reduce barriers to pursuing postsecondary education. At a statewide level, we found that many of these efforts relied heavily on federal

funds or significant financial contributions from the J. A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation. Without these types of funding, Idaho lacked the infrastructure to financially sustain outreach efforts.

According to Board of Education officials, the board recognizes the value of strong community partnerships that support Idaho's goals for increasing levels of postsecondary education. As part of its Complete College Idaho Plan, the board noted that it had identified several initiatives to strengthen existing community partnerships. However, no legislation was introduced during the 2013 legislative session that would have increased state funding for outreach efforts or reduced Idaho's reliance on outside funding sources.

Status: This recommendation is **not implemented**.

Data Management

Recommendation 4.1: *In light of the State Board of Education's newly defined education goal, the board should ensure that all postsecondary institutions or schools in Idaho that produce degrees or certificates requiring at least one year of academic study are captured in the board's data set. To accurately set a baseline and measure progress, the board should consider the following questions and include them as a part of their statewide educational attainment survey:*

- 1. Which institutions or schools (public, private, or out of state) offer those programs?*
- 2. Are those institutions or schools currently reporting data to the board? If not, how will those certificates and degrees be included in measuring progress toward reaching its goal?*
- 3. Given these considerations, what data will the board use to determine the state's current baseline of educational attainment and measure progress in meeting its goal?*

Discussed in our initial report, we found that the board would not be using its longitudinal data system to measure progress in reaching its 60 percent education goal. Rather, the board would rely on information reported through the Census, which was limited in several areas. First, Census data does not report on those certificates that take at least one year to complete but are less than an associate's degree. Second, the Census data does not account for: (1) students who complete postsecondary education outside of Idaho and do not return or (2) students who complete their education in Idaho and then moved to another state. If the State Board of Education accounted for more specific elements of postsecondary education, it could more accurately measure Idaho's current levels of educational attainment and more accurately monitor its progress in reaching the 60 percent education goal.

Despite the limitations we identified, board officials have reinforced that they designed their goal to measure the educational attainment of Idaho's citizens. They said the board's goal was not designed to capture the number of students who left Idaho after completing their postsecondary education nor to capture the number of students who were educated outside the state.

Board officials indicate they will continue to use the 2010 Census information as their baseline data. This form of measurement means that certain individuals will not be counted as part of the board's progress. As a result, the board does not have an accurate baseline of current education levels or comprehensive data to measure progress in reaching its 60 percent goal.²

According to the board, the goal's final measure of success will be tracked using the 2020 Census, which does not collect or report on certificates from programs that last at least one year but are less than an associate's degree.

Status: This recommendation is **not implemented**.

Recommendation 4.2: *The State Board of Education should establish performance measures and benchmarks to strategically increase the number of degrees awarded at public institutions as part of meeting its 60 percent goal. The board should also formally coordinate with private institutions and proprietary schools to better account for increases in degrees at those schools. (Note: Implementation of recommendation 5.1 will help ensure this objective aligns with employment projections.)*

Because the State Board of Education has tasked Idaho public institutions to formulate strategies to increase the number of residents who earn a degree or certificate, a specific performance measure for monitoring the progress of the institutions will better align the efforts of the institutions with the board's goal. In addition to public institutions, formal coordination with private institutions and proprietary schools will further ensure all types of postsecondary opportunities are considered in the board's 60 percent goal.

In June 2012 the board finalized its Complete College Idaho Plan and outlined five focus areas for reaching its goal:

1. *Strengthen the pipeline.* Ensure college and career readiness; develop advising along the K–20 continuum that links education with career; support an accelerated pathway from high school to postsecondary and career

² In our initial report we also identified students enrolled at private institutions as a limitation to the board's data collection efforts. Although the board does not directly collect graduation data from private institutions, all institutions that accept federal financial aid are required to report data to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). According to board officials, the board will continue to use available data as part of its decision-making process.

2. *Transform remediation.* Clarify and implement college and career readiness education and assessments; develop a statewide model to transform remedial placement and support, including a range of remediation options
3. *Structure for success.* Communicate strong, clear, and guaranteed statewide articulation and transfer options among postsecondary institutions
4. *Reward progress and completion.* Establish metrics and accountability that are tied to institutional mission; recognize and reward performance; redesign the state's current offerings of financial support for postsecondary students
5. *Leverage partnerships.* Strengthen collaborations among the following entities: education and business or industry partners; College Access Network; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education

Successfully implementing these strategies will require ongoing coordination with not only postsecondary institutions, but also elementary and secondary schools and business and industry. The board recognizes that creating a college-going culture requires preparation and information for students and families that starts when students are young and continues through the completion of high school.

To help strengthen collaboration between education and business partners, the plan identifies several activities that would help support the board's goals. One potential activity identifies specific sectors of industry that have a high need for trained employees and then provide employees with information about the benefits of a certificate or degree. These types of activities may eventually assist the board in developing specific performance measures and benchmarks to strategically increase degree production.³

According to the board, all institutions will present their performance measures to the board at its October meeting. These measures will include information relevant to the Complete College Idaho Plan, such as enrollment, retention, graduation, and remediation.

Status: This recommendation is **in process**.

³ The board notes that it does not have the authority to require private institutions to increase their degree production. Our recommendation was not intended to require any institution, public or private, to increase degree production. Rather, we recommended the board develop a mechanism to account for the degrees produced at private institutions as part of the 60 percent goal.

Recommendation 4.3: *The State Board of Education should collect data on scholarship recipients and track their academic progress throughout their postsecondary program. The board can then use that data in two ways:*

- *Help determine whether existing scholarships are a successful tool in increasing the number of students who go to college and the number who complete a postsecondary program*
- *Assist in implementing recommendation 3.1 when making specific decisions about funding need-based scholarships*

As previously mentioned, Senate Bill 1027 significantly reorganizes the state's scholarship program. Under this recently passed law, the board will be collecting and reporting more comprehensive outcome data for state scholarship recipients. In addition, both private and public institutions will be required to submit data to help the board better assess program effectiveness. The bill specifies that "all eligible institutions participating in the scholarships and state aid programs shall report student level data on the effectiveness of the program. The data reported shall be established by the State Board of Education."

According to the board, those reporting requirements have not yet been fully developed but will be established with input from the scholarship committee this summer. Institutions will then be required to report on the new scholarship data beginning in 2015.

Status: This recommendation is **in process**.

Strategic Planning

Recommendation 5.1: *To help ensure the success of its 60 percent goal, the State Board of Education should develop a statewide strategic plan for meeting that goal in a way that will produce the right types of graduates for the right types of jobs available in Idaho now and in the future.*

As part of its plan, the board should coordinate with the Department of Labor so that each of the strategies outlined by the public postsecondary institutions to meet the 60 percent goal aligns with the employment projections made by the department. The board should consider using the existing framework of the Workforce Development Council to facilitate a dialogue among the board, the department, and the institutions.

By more closely aligning our state's education goals with projected workforce needs, Idaho will be able to provide postsecondary education opportunities for students that will help produce graduates for relevant employment opportunities in Idaho. As workforce needs change, a comprehensive, statewide education and

employment strategy will allow Idaho to be better equipped to adapt to those changes.

Our report served as a catalyst for the Governor's Workforce Development Council to create the Educational Attainment Task Force. The task force, created in July 2012, was established to recommend policies and strategies to the Governor and the Board of Education to ensure that "sixty percent of Idaho workers will have a degree, certificate, industry recognized credential, or apprenticeship beyond high school by 2020." This goal of the council, while similar to that set by the Board of Education, focuses on all Idaho workers and also includes industry-recognized credentials and apprenticeships.

At a meeting on March 13, 2013, the Workforce Development Council accepted eight recommendations made by the task force:

1. *Credit Process for Prior Learning.* Create a statewide portfolio approval process for awarding credits based on prior learning and experience
2. *Education Transparency Metrics.* Develop, publish, and deliver to students, parents, and policymakers education outcome data
3. *Career and College Counseling.* Support innovative and evidence-based career and college counseling programs
4. *Industry Sector Workforce Development Training Fund Grant Program.* Support a grant program to fund partnerships between industry sectors and academic institutions to prepare workers for specific employment opportunities
5. *Career Readiness Tools.* Establish a team to determine how or if a career readiness tool could or should be adopted in Idaho
6. *Industry Advisory Committees.* Improve industry advisory committees through standardization of guidelines and incorporating best practices
7. *Credential Benchmark Survey.* Create a survey that will provide a benchmark for industry-recognized credentials and details on "some college" attainment
8. *Industry/Education Partnership Event.* Create an annual event to establish a schedule for business and education to engage with each other and provide opportunities for industry to communicate workforce or skill needs to training providers

The task force finalized its report of these recommendations and presented them to the Governor on May 15. The task force plans to present them to the Board of Education on June 20. According to Department of Labor staff, these

presentations will conclude the work of the task force. The council plans to develop a process to monitor the implementation of the recommendations, potentially through the creation of another task force.

The recommendations put forth by the task force align with our report in several key areas, particularly recommendations 3, 4, 7, and 8. If implemented, each of these recommendations would help reduce barriers to postsecondary education, provide more comprehensive information on the current educational attainment levels statewide, and create a mechanism for ongoing coordination between education and workforce stakeholders.

Status: This recommendation is **in process**.

Recommendation 5.2: *The State Board of Education should work with both the public and private postsecondary institutions and the Department of Labor to develop formal agreements to share student-level information that allows the department to track graduates of Idaho’s postsecondary institutions and determine whether they are employed in Idaho and, if so, where. The department should then enter into new agreements or expand existing agreements with neighboring states to track Idaho’s postsecondary graduates in the workforce outside of Idaho.*

In the first year of a three-year project, the Department of Labor is partnering with the Board of Education to more closely align and better understand the relationship of workforce, education, and training data. The department has received nearly \$2.8 million from the board and the US Department of Education to fund this project, which is part of the State Longitudinal Data System.

The Department of Labor is also expanding partnerships with other entities, including the Idaho Transportation Department, to better match workforce and education data. In addition, the Department of Labor noted that it has developed or renewed data sharing agreements with the following entities:

- Montana, Washington, and Wyoming
- Wage Record Interchange System (which has 22 member states)
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)

Collectively, the department believes that these agreements will allow it to analyze education data for Idaho’s neighboring states and learn more about the correlation among education, training, and the workforce. According to the board, it has received feedback on nearly 900,000 records as part of its work with WICHE and is using that information to resolve several data issues, including removing students’ names that had been submitted but did not meet the reporting criteria.

Status: This recommendation is **in process**.



IDAHO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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February 1, 2013

Rakesh Mohan, Director
Office of Performance Evaluation
954 W. Jefferson St.
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Dear Mr. Mohan:

On behalf of the Idaho State Board of Education, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to formally respond to your office's follow-up report on Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education.

Recommendation 2.1: The Department of Education has many conflicting priorities and has not chosen to request funding for a dedicated position at this time. Board staff has implemented a counselor training program funded by the College Access Challenge Grant through the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) that is available to counselors statewide. The goal is to provide training to all secondary counselors in the state over the next two years at no cost to school districts. Through the resources provided by the grant, and in collaboration with IDLA, we have been able to establish curriculum on a platform that can be accessed by all counselors in the state and has enabled them to receive consistent and coordinated training. Continued use of the training resource at the end of the grant will be dependent on individual school district priorities and budget restrictions.

Recommendation 2.2: Tight budgets at the school district level may result in the reduction of personnel within the school districts. These decisions are made at the local district level. Districts will often first cut those positions considered administrative or do not have direct student contact within the classroom setting. Secondary school counselors often fall into this category. A legislative change in the school district funding formula, or a separate funding stream, would be necessary to ensure school districts have dedicated funds available to hire school counselors.

The State Board of Education recognizes the importance of student advising along the K-20 educational continuum. The Board finalized and approved the Complete College Idaho Plan in June 2012. The plan contains five strategies for Idaho to meet its 60% educational attainment goal. One of these strategies is to strengthen the educational pipeline. To reach this goal the Board has outlined specific initiatives, including the development of integrated collaborative counselor training into pre-service school counselor and teacher requirements and the improvement of direct adult contact with student's vis-à-vis counselors. The integration of counselor training into pre-service programs will give pre-service teachers the skills necessary to act as student advisors in those districts that do not have the resources to hire dedicated counselors. The Office of the State Board of Education, through the resources provided by the College Access Challenge grant, has been able to start a Near Peer Mentor Program currently being piloted in three schools. Near Peers are recent college graduates, and individuals who are close to the age range of high school students who the students can relate to. The objective of the program is to increase the number of students who enter and complete postsecondary education in their respective high schools, with an emphasis on low-income and first generation populations. The mentors seek out and work with high school students who typically "fall through the cracks" and help them plan for some kind of education and training beyond high school. The mentors are non-certificated personnel that can be hired by the districts at a rate much less than what they would pay for an additional counselor. The mentor earns valuable work experience while the school is able to hire an individual to do a specific task that does not require a certificate at a reduced rate. At the completion of the pilot stage, we will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the program through the increase of students that go on to postsecondary education from these high schools. If the program is proven successful, other school districts may choose to implement it.

Recommendation 3.1: The Board supports the increase of funding for need based scholarships. During this past year, the State Board of Education formed a committee co-chaired by past Board President, Curtis Eaton and the First Lady, Lori Otter. The committee was made up of a wide range of stakeholders. The Committee reviewed the state funded scholarship programs and looked at best practices on how to use the minimal dollars available most effectively. The final recommendations of the committee were presented to the Board in October 2012, resulting in proposed changes to our scholarship legislation that would ensure the scholarship program is relevant and effective in assisting Idaho students, as well as improving the efficiency of program administration. The proposed changes are currently before the legislature for consideration.

Recommendation 3.2: The State Board of Education recognizes the value of partnerships within the community to further Idaho's postsecondary educational attainment goals. One barrier to postsecondary education is that of culture and the need of various population groups to recognize the importance of postsecondary education. This can most effectively be done through efforts established by and within the local community. Due to the rural nature of the state, these partnerships can be most effectively accomplished by our public postsecondary institutions within their communities. The Board remains an advocate for increased levels of

statewide support for school districts. However, additional education reform efforts will be necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to be educated to a level that will ensure optimum success in postsecondary education as well as the workforce. Through the Complete College Idaho Plan, the Board has identified initiatives for strengthening collaborations between education and industry partners. The State Board of Education continues to work with the legislature to identify strategies for sustaining efforts for increasing college access for Idaho's citizens.

Recommendation 4.1: The Board is very committed to using data about the programs, degrees, and graduates of all Idaho postsecondary institutions, particularly those under its purview. Simply capturing those data will not efficiently allow the Board to track Idaho's progress toward the 60% goal. The number of degrees conferred is only one interim measure the Board uses to assess progress toward the 60% attainment goal. The goal itself is the educational attainment of Idaho citizens; regardless of the state they received their postsecondary education. The approach proposed in recommendation 4.1 will not capture the Idahoans educated out of state, nor will Idaho's public P-20 statewide longitudinal data system. The data reported in the 2010 Census report is the baseline data being used.

Currently, the Board does not directly collect graduation data from private degree granting institutions. All institutions, private and public, who accept federal financial aid, are required to report these data to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Through IPEDS, Board staff has access to graduation data for most of the private and proprietary institutions within the state. The Board will continue to use this additional data to inform decision making. Through collaborative relationships and additional data sources the Board will be able to collect an accurate picture of the number of degrees awarded within the state, regardless of the institution that awards the certificate or degree. The number of certificates and degrees held by Idaho citizens only partially informs the progress made between 2010 and 2020 towards the Board's 60% goal, as it does not take into account the individuals who migrate in or out of the state. The final measure of success will have to be tracked through the 2020 Census.

Recommendation 4.2: The Board of Education currently establishes performance measures and benchmarks through the annual strategic planning process. This includes not only the establishment of performance measures and benchmarks in the Board's statewide plan, but also performance measures and benchmarks for each individual institution under the Board's governance. The Board approved the framework for the Complete College Idaho Plan at the June 2012 State Board of Education meeting. The plan includes five focus areas for reaching Idaho's attainment goal. In addition to this, each of the public institutions have formulated strategies specific to their individual resources to meet the state's attainment goal in alignment with the Complete College Idaho Plan. The State Board of Education does not have the authority to require private institutions to increase their individual degree production.

Recommendation 4.3: Board of Education staff will continue to collect and use data on scholarship award applicants. The proposed changes to the state scholarship programs that are

currently under review with the state legislature require that every participating institution (private and public) report data to the State Board of Education for the continued evaluation of the program's effectiveness.

Recommendation 5.1: The alignment of postsecondary programs and their graduates with workforce needs is important to the Board. The Board wants education in Idaho to meet future workforce needs, and recognizes that maintaining the status quo is not enough. The Board is currently working with the Idaho Workforce Development Council, Idaho Business for Education, and various stakeholder groups to identify strategies to meet that end. In addition to this, institutions currently work with businesses within their regions to identify workforce needs and evaluate their programs' capacity to meet those needs. Additionally, the community colleges work with various advisory councils made up of industry partners regarding specific programs provided by the colleges. In Idaho's Complete College Idaho Plan the Board has identified the importance of leveraging partnerships and has identified collaborations between education and the business community as a key initiative in meeting Idaho's 60% educational attainment goal.

Recommendation 5.2: The Board and Idaho's public postsecondary institutions have developed data sharing agreements with the Department of Labor, allowing Board staff to analyze student workforce data. The Gates Foundation funded the WICHE Multi-State Data Exchange pilot between agencies in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Hawaii. In January 2013, Board staff received the initial data from this pilot allowing us to analyze data from all four (4) states on students who were seniors in Idaho during the 2004-05 school year and students who enrolled in postsecondary education in the fall of 2005. The data includes postsecondary and workforce information.

Sincerely,



Tracie Bent
Chief Planning and Policy Officer



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

February 13, 2012

Rakesh Mohan, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations
Idaho State Legislature
Statehouse

Dear Mr. Mohan,

Per your request, I am writing to provide a follow up to the Office of Performance Evaluations' Study on Barriers to Post Secondary Completion, which was published in 2012. The topic of this report is critical to the economy of our state and the state's viability in the future. The Idaho State Board of Education has set an ambitious goal of 60 percent of adults between 25 and 34 years attaining a college degree or certificate by 2020. Currently, only 34 percent of adults have an associate's degree or more. If we are to attain this goal as a state, we must better understand the barriers and overcome them.

The State Department of Education is committed to Idaho's students being career and college ready when they graduate from an Idaho high school. Since I took office as State Superintendent, the Department has worked closely with the Legislature, Governor and State Board of Education to put policy, programs and initiatives in place to enhance students' opportunities for the future including, but not limited to: student engagement, access and greater equity to classroom technology, mastery in a subject area, advanced opportunities such as dual credit courses paid for by the state, and more course offerings. In addition, the state is implementing higher standards in mathematics and English Language Arts, and the state is paying for all high school juniors to take a college entrance exam before graduation. While barriers to higher education are often as varied as students themselves, more opportunities for students will help create a culture where it is expected to go on after high school.

Last year, I expressed support for some of OPE's recommendations, including better student data systems. However, at that time, I stated I do not believe all the recommendations in the OPE report were necessary to decrease barriers. The OPE report provided two specific recommendations to the Department.

- Recommendation 2.1: The Department of Education should have a dedicated position to serve as a statewide k-12 counselor coordinator. This person would spearhead communications efforts at the state level and coordinate training for all school counselors across the state.
- Recommendation 2.2: The Department should take steps to decrease the student to counselor ratio, particularly for those positions that provide education and career counselor.

I will discuss both of these recommendations again, and the Department's position on these recommendations going forward.



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TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Recommendation 2.1: *The Department of Education should have a dedicated position to serve as a statewide k-12 counselor coordinator. This person would spearhead communications efforts at the state level and coordinate training for all school counselors across the state.*

Just as the responsibility of creating a college-going culture is not simply the counselor's job in the high school, we believe the same is true within our own agency. All employees who work to improve student achievement have the responsibility of communicating with counselors on relevant topics whether it is the Department's assessment director or communications director. When we isolate the college culture to one person, it often leaves others feeling it is only that person's responsibility. Since 2012, we have reorganized the structure of the Department to better meet the needs of the customers of education. One change that was made was the creation of a College- and Career-Readiness Program within our Federal Programs Division. This program oversees initiatives, such as Gear Up and 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and helps coordinate efforts throughout the Department to ensure parents, teachers, administrators and students are getting the information and technical assistance they need.

If the state were to add an additional FTE, I would suggest a coordinator who works on helping students become postsecondary-ready through advanced opportunities including dual credit, Advanced Placement, or college entrance exams. It would seem to me that a position focused on expanding opportunities for students, rather than focused only on communications for adults, would be a more prudent and effective use of state dollars.

Recommendation 2.2: *The Department should take steps to decrease the student to counselor ratio, particularly for those positions that provide education and career counselor.*

The responsibility for a college-going culture should be all educators in a school, not focused on one person. While counselors provide excellent service, it would be difficult to add enough employees to make this recommendation meaningful at this time. Given the limited resources of the state, my priority is raising the total compensation for current employees to ensure retention and recruitment of the best and the brightest, rather than diluting a limited pool of salary dollars. In addition, I strongly believe more strategies should be incorporated to help schools create a climate where high school graduation, career counseling, and matriculation to postsecondary education are part of every certified staff's responsibility, not just career counselors. Several schools in Idaho have implemented these best practices. I visited one school district last year where every Friday, the teachers and staff members proudly sport a T-shirt or sweatshirt from their alma mater. This is more than just a T-shirt. It is the beginning of a conversation throughout the day, where every teacher and staff member engages students in a discussion about the importance of postsecondary education, their personal experience going on after high school, and the opportunities that are available, no matter the career path you choose. This is just one example I have seen that could easily be duplicated across the state and that ensures every staff member is involved in the success of students after high school ó not just the school counselor.

It also is worth noting that in the past three decades, the number of school and district staff across the country and in Idaho has increased as the number of students has increased. This includes the number



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of counselors. Over the past 15 years, student enrollment has increased by more than 21 percent. The number of full-time equivalent counselors has kept pace, increasing by 29.4 percent in this same time period. In recent years, as our schools have faced financial challenges due to the great recession, I am sure many districts have had to make difficult decisions in an effort to preserve critical student-teacher contact time. Still, we know that 603 counselors are working in our schools today. They play a critical role today and will continue to do so in the future.

Thank you for all of you and your staff's continued work on this report and others.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Luna", with a long, sweeping underline.

TOM LUNA
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

cc: State Board of Education

February 13, 2013

Rakesh Mohan, Director
Office of Performance Evaluations
ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Mr. Mohan:

Thank you for the opportunity to update the Office of Performance Evaluations on our efforts to address and support the recommendations outlined in your report. We're seeing progress on several fronts.

***Recommendation 5.1:** To help ensure the success of its 60 percent goal, the State Board of Education should develop a statewide strategic plan for meeting that goal in a way that will produce the right types of graduates for the right types of jobs available in Idaho now and in the future.*

As part of its plan, the board should coordinate with the Department of Labor so that each of the strategies outlined by the public postsecondary institutions to meet the 60 percent goal aligns with the employment projections made by the department. The board should consider using the existing framework of the Workforce Development Council to facilitate a dialogue among the board, the department and the institutions.

Our Research and Analysis staff continue to produce and share short- and long-term industry and occupational projections and associated educational attainment forecasts with State Board of Education staff. Also, since it is not unusual for our department projections to differ with other research entities, we strive to sort out and define what the differences mean for Idaho.

Take for example, differences in methodology between the Bureau of Labor Statistics projections by educational achievement and Anthony Carnevale's research findings published by Georgetown University's Center on Education. Findings derived from both methodologies are vital to understanding the minimum levels of education and training our human capital needs to thrive in today's global economy as well as optimal levels of education and training should we continue to face a skills mismatch in Idaho's diverse and ever-evolving economy.

Knowledge and understanding of these differences also highlight the importance of the department's Career Information System, which provides valuable guidance to students on training and education tracts that lead to high-paying occupations in high-growth industries. Our collective efforts are also intertwined with the goals and objectives of the Idaho Workforce Development Council, which works to ensure its goals and objectives align with those of the state board. As a result, the presentation delivered by OPE staff at our October 2012 meeting served as a catalyst for the establishment of an Educational Attainment Task Force. Appointed by the governor, the council will make recommendations in 2013 to the State Board of Education and the governor on how to reach the 60 percent goal.

Recommendation 5.2: *The State Board of Education should work with both the public and private postsecondary institutions and the Department of Labor to develop formal agreements to share student-level information that allows the department to track graduates of Idaho's postsecondary institutions and determine whether they are employed in Idaho and, if so, where. The department should then enter into new or expand existing agreements with neighboring states to track Idaho's postsecondary graduates in the workforce outside of Idaho.*

The department has received nearly \$2.8 million from the State Board of Education and the U.S. Department of Education to help build the wage record-matching section of a State Longitudinal Data System. We are currently in the first year of a three-year project that will ultimately result in the alignment of workforce, educational, training and other ancillary data for wage record-matching purposes. The result will be a more effective and rapid analysis of the relationships between training, educational attainment, workforce outcomes and other associated social programs.

To augment this effort, the Idaho Department of Labor recently entered into an agreement with the Idaho Transportation Department that facilitates a better match of workforce and education data. Labor has also either developed new or renewed data-sharing agreements with Washington, Montana and Wyoming and can access data from the Wage Record Interchange System, which has 22 member states across the country. Combined, these two efforts allow for wage record matching for educational analytical purposes with Idaho's contiguous states. Idaho will also continue to seek data-sharing agreements with the states that it currently does not have agreements with and that are not part of the Wage Record Interchange System.

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education is another partner in this effort. Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the commission is coordinating an education and workforce data exchange pilot among four states - Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon and Washington – to answer critical policy questions by providing a more comprehensive view of the production, stock and flow of human capital within regions and between states.

In closing, the department is excited to be a part of these partnerships, and we look forward to taking our collective research endeavor to fruition. We believe – and agree - a better understanding of the correlation between education, training and workforce outcomes will result in a better quality of life for all Idahoans.

Sincerely,



Roger Madsen
Director

Office of Performance Evaluations Reports, 2011–Present

Publication numbers ending with “F” are follow-up reports of previous evaluations.

Pub. #	Report Title	Date Released
11-01	Distribution and Sale of Liquor in Idaho	January 2011
11-02	Coordination and Delivery of Senior Services in Idaho	February 2011
11-03F	Increasing Efficiencies in Idaho’s Parole Process	February 2011
11-04F	Idaho Transportation Department Performance Audit	March 2011
11-05	Delays in Medicaid Claims Processing	March 2011
11-06	Equity in Higher Education Funding	November 2011
11-07	Idaho’s End-Stage Renal Disease Program	November 2011
11-08F	Distribution and Sale of Liquor in Idaho	November 2011
12-01	Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education	January 2012
12-02F	Delays in Medicaid Claims Processing	January 2012
12-03	Lottery Operations and Charitable Gaming	February 2012
12-04	Establishing an Efficiency Commission	February 2012
12-05F	Coordination and Delivery of Senior Services in Idaho	February 2012
12-06F	Operational Efficiencies in Idaho’s Prison System	February 2012
12-07F	Idaho’s End-Stage Renal Disease Program	March 2012
12-08F	Idaho Transportation Department Performance Audit	March 2012
12-09F	Delays in Medicaid Claims Processing	November 2012
12-10F	Increasing Efficiencies in Idaho’s Parole Process	November 2012
13-01	Workforce Issues Affecting Public School Teachers	January 2013
13-02	Strengthening Contract Management in Idaho	January 2013
13-03	State Employee Compensation and Turnover	January 2013
13-04	Policy Differences Between Charter and Traditional Schools	March 2013
13-05F	Coordination and Delivery of Senior Services in Idaho	March 2013
13-06	Guide to Comparing Business Tax Policies	June 2013
13-07F	Lottery Operations and Charitable Gaming	June 2013
13-08F	Governance of EMS Agencies in Idaho	June 2013
13-09F	Equity in Higher Education Funding	June 2013
13-10F	Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education	June 2013

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