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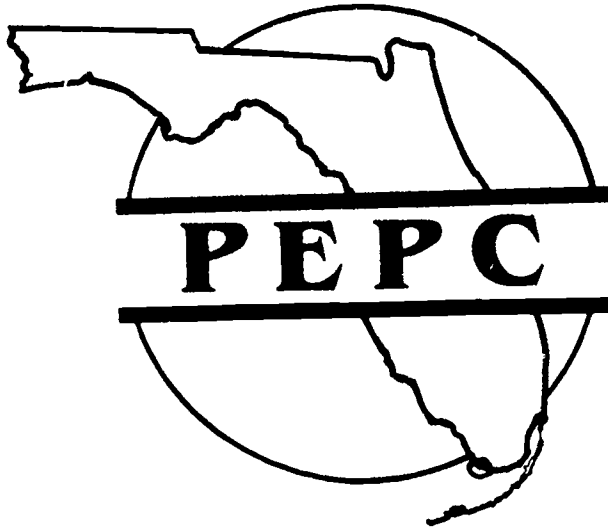
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ABSTRACT

This report presents a review and evaluation of the accountability plans in public postsecondary education as they relate to the mission and goals of postsecondary institutions. A review of current accountability activities found that existing legislation and institutional responses do not sufficiently embody the kinds of characteristics that would lead to improved management at the local level and provide for systematic, ongoing assessment. State accountability policy should be guided by the dual concerns of fostering institutional effectiveness and verifying that institutions are fulfilling their missions. The report outlines a comprehensive accountability process founded on these dual purposes and proposes recommendations to support such a process. Seven appendixes provide: (1) a list of summary points on accountability; (2) Florida statutes on state university accountability process; (3) relevant Florida statutes on community college accountability process; (4) Florida statutes on statement of purpose and mission; (5) Florida statutes on community colleges' mission; (6) the characteristics of an accountability plan; and (7) an accountability report, and a list of master plan priority areas. Contains 14 references. (MDM)

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ACCOUNTABILITY IN FLORIDA'S POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Report and Recommendations of the Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission

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The major responsibility of the Commission is preparing and updating every five years a master plan for postsecondary education. The enabling legislation provides that the Plan "shall include consideration of the promotion of quality, fundamental educational goals, programmatic access, needs for remedial education, regional and state economic development, international education programs, demographic patterns, student demand for programs, needs of particular subgroups of the population, implementation of innovative educational techniques and technology, and the requirements of the labor market. The capacity of existing programs, in both public and independent institutions, to respond to identified needs shall be evaluated and a plan shall be developed to respond efficiently to unmet needs."

Other responsibilities include recommending to the State Board of Education program contracts with independent institutions; advising the State Board regarding the need for and location of new programs, branch campuses and centers of public postsecondary education institutions; reviewing public postsecondary education budget requests for compliance with the State Master Plan; and periodically conducting special studies, analyses, and evaluations related to specific postsecondary education issues and programs.

Further information about the Commission, its publications, meetings and other activities may be obtained from the Commission office, 231 Collins Building, Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-0400; telephone (904) 488-7894; FAX (904) 922-5388.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PLANNING COMMISSION

***ACCOUNTABILITY IN FLORIDA'S POSTSECONDARY
EDUCATION SYSTEM***

Prepared in Response to Specific Appropriation 417B
of the
1993 General Appropriations Act
Chapter 93-184, Laws of Florida

1993 - Report 2

January, 1994

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Proviso language accompanying Specific Appropriation 417B of the 1993 General Appropriations Act directed the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission to:

review and evaluate the accountability plans in public postsecondary education as they relate to the mission and goals of each system and its respective institutions as well as the goals as articulated by the Legislature. The review and evaluation shall specifically address the extent to which the institutional and systemwide plans should be modified to provide for specific, measurable goals. The report, including any suggested modifications to the plans shall be submitted to the Legislature and the State Board of Education by January 1, 1994.

The 1991 Legislature passed benchmark accountability legislation for postsecondary education as well as for the K-12 sector. Legislative intent was to improve management as well as accountability; statutory language calls for the accountability process to provide for systematic, ongoing assessment or evaluation. University accountability emphasizes evaluation of quality and effectiveness, while community college accountability emphasizes quality as well as instructional and administrative efficiency and effectiveness. Statutes required the boards to submit accountability plans and annual accountability reports.

The Commission firmly endorses an accountability system for public education in Florida. As a result of its evaluation of accountability activities required through statute, the Commission concluded that existing legislation and institutional responses do not sufficiently embody the kinds of characteristics that would lead to improved management at the local level and provide for systematic, ongoing assessment. While systems and institutions responded to present

statutory requirements and have expanded the measures in some areas, initial reports will not provide meaningful improvement in institutional effectiveness or respond adequately to policy leaders' concerns with critical statewide educational priorities.

A comparison of 1991 accountability legislation for the State University System and the Community College System indicates that several important characteristics of an inclusive accountability process are not represented in existing statutes (see attached table). Additionally, while the performance measures identified in the legislation will respond to sections of the State's mission for postsecondary education, other important aspects are not present. For example, access is a critical part of the postsecondary education mission. Access performance measures include enrollment, retention to graduation, and minority participation. Transfer is an important characteristic of access; however, the universities do not have a transfer objective or measure. Community colleges have an outcome measure for transfer performance in the SUS, but no objective or measure on the rate of transfer or admission to the SUS.

Meaningful accountability activities among the colleges and universities of Florida should support positive institutional change and provide assurance to the citizens of the State that the institutions are fulfilling the mission of the postsecondary education system. Thus, the primary purpose of accountability should be to foster improvement at the institutional level. A second, yet significant, purpose is to provide information to state-level policy makers. A well-constructed accountability process can address both of these purposes. This report outlines a comprehensive accountability process founded on these dual purposes of accountability and proposes recommendations to support such a process.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Commission found that existing accountability plans and practices would not answer key concerns about improving educational quality, effectiveness, or efficiency. A holistic design is needed to define the accountability process more clearly and achieve the purposes of fostering institutional effectiveness and providing performance information to state-level policy makers.

1. State accountability policy for postsecondary education should be guided by the dual concerns of fostering institutional effectiveness and verifying that institutions are fulfilling the postsecondary mission specified in statute while making efficient and effective use of their resources.

Existing legislation includes system and institutional annual reporting on progress in implementing measures. Under the accountability process outlined in this report, the foundation of accountability is the statutory mission for postsecondary education; system as well as institutional goals and activities should relate to that mission. To ensure that the total process is integrated and to promote accountability of the process itself, a state-level review of accountability plans and reports should be used in making recommendations to the Legislature for various planning activities, including budgetary purposes.

The Commission's master plan, *Challenges, Realities, Strategies*, the master plans completed by the State University System and the Community College System, as well as the K-12 goals established in Blueprint 2000 have several issues in common that postsecondary education should address in the near future. State-level planning and policy recommendations for postsecondary education are also found in strategic plans prepared by

the Department of Education and by the Office of the Governor. These plans provide a rich resource for identifying priority areas for focused attention by the systems and the institutions. Common issues and concerns found in these plans include *quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity*. System and institutional goals and objectives should be evaluated in terms of how they contribute to the enhancement of the priority areas; faculty should be partners in the on-going dialogue concerning how the priorities will be addressed. Since state-level priorities will change over time, continual review and discussion among educational representatives and others is warranted.

2. The State Board of Education and the Legislature should periodically review the systems' and institutions' accountability efforts for progress toward achieving statewide priorities of quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity for postsecondary education and the goals in the accountability plans.

Accountability for postsecondary education should not be limited to the systems and the institutions. For accountability to be purposeful, for example, an inclusive evaluation should examine how state-level entities receive and use accountability reports submitted by the institutions and the systems. Support from state-level entities, particularly the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Legislature, through policy guidance and funding, are critical to the success of accountability.

Recommendations:

3. A comprehensive evaluation of accountability should include in its analysis those state-level bodies with the funding and policy-making authority to influence accountability.

4. *Representatives of the Governor's Office, the Legislature, the Board of Regents, the State Board of Community Colleges, the Division of Vocational, Adult, and Community Education, the Commission on Education Reform and Accountability, the independent postsecondary sector, and the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission should meet annually to examine education issues, to coordinate efforts to achieve statewide priorities in higher education, to discuss progress toward achieving the priorities, and determine how this progress shall be monitored and communicated to the public.*

5. *Annual budget requests from the systems should specify how statewide priorities and system goals are reflected in the requests.*

6. *Any new funding formulas for postsecondary education should respond to and reinforce the state-level priorities identified in the State's master plans, strategic plans, and accountability documents.*

7. *The Legislature should provide incentive funding to assist the State University System and the Community College System as well as the institutions in attaining specified objectives for each of the state-level priority areas of quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity.* Incentive funding based on established performance, rather than start-up support for new activities, would recognize recent achievements that foster the quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity. For example, increasing the number of minority students who complete a degree in Florida is a statewide objective. Incentive funding for this objective would be awarded to institutions that have demonstrated an increase over time in the number of

minority students who received an associate or bachelor's degree.

8. *Individual institutions should target a portion of their existing funds for achievement of identified goals/objectives subject to external validation.* The institution's annual accountability report would then explain how much was targeted, where the funds were targeted, and the results of that effort. It is important to acknowledge several on-going accountability-related activities at the system level for the colleges and universities. Duplicative reporting is both unnecessary and resource consuming. To the extent possible, institutions and systems should be allowed to fold existing reporting requirements into the accountability report.

9. *The Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges should review existing reporting requirements to determine which of these are duplicated in the accountability report and thus should be eliminated from statute and rule.*

Accountability should be an integral and continuous part of postsecondary education and another tool for educators and policy makers to use for informed decision making. Accountability provides an opportunity as well as a challenge for change--through the system and institutional plans and reports, the public system of postsecondary education has an opportunity to reassert its ability to define and manage its direction. We need to map a direction founded in a total process approach for accountability. The approach proposed in this report is based on the premise that a meaningful accountability process for postsecondary education must have as its primary purpose to foster positive change and enhance performance at the institution level. A secondary, yet significant, purpose is to provide information to state-level policy makers on key measures.

**COMPARISON OF 1991 LEGISLATION WITH
PROPOSED STATE-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS**

Characteristics of State-level Accountability Process	1991 SUS Accountability Legislation	1991 CCS Accountability Legislation
1. Foster institutional improvement	Emphasis on <u>system</u>	Emphasis on <u>system</u> .
2. Be based on the mission statement of the State's postsecondary system.	No reference to State mission.	No reference to State mission.
3. Be related to a few specific state priorities.	Focus on specific measures, not general priorities.	Focus on specific measures, not general priorities.
4. Be related to Commission and system Master Plan goals.	Not directly related to any master plan goals.	Not directly related to any master plan goals.
5. Contain a few key measures for each priority.	9 measures; no reference to priority areas.	5 measures; no reference to priority areas.
6. Include performance at a single point in time and trends.	Requires annual report but no requirements on trend data.	Requires annual report but no requirements on trend data.
7. Compare with peer systems or states.	No provision for comparison with other systems or states.	No provision for comparison with other systems or states.
8. Include all institutional functions.	Requires monitoring of all major areas of instruction, research, and service; measures focus only on instruction. No direct analysis of general education.	No reference to institutional functions, but requires plan to improve instructional and administrative efficiency; measures only for student performance. No direct analysis of general education.
9. Evaluate inputs, process, output, and outcomes.	Of 9 measures, most are output; a few are outcomes and process.	Of 5 measures, each aspect (e.g., input) is represented.
10. Report to public in accessible and understandable format.	Requires annual report.	Requires annual report to Governor, Senate President, and House Speaker.

Source: Sections 240.214 and 240.324, Florida Statutes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Proviso language accompanying Specific Appropriation 417B of the 1993 General Appropriations Act directed the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission to:

review and evaluate the accountability plans in public postsecondary education as they relate to the mission and goals of each system and its respective institutions as well as the goals as articulated by the Legislature. The review and evaluation shall specifically address the extent to which the institutional and systemwide plans should be modified to provide for specific, measurable goals. The report, including any suggested modifications to the plans shall be submitted to the Legislature and the State Board of Education by January 1, 1994.

The Chairman of the Commission assigned the Program Committee to oversee this study. Inez Bailey chaired the Committee; other members were James Talley, Robert Taylor, and Mark Wheeler. The Program Committee met seven times between July 1993 and January 1994 to discuss information collected for the report and receive public testimony. Among those consulted during the development of the study were the State University System, the Community College System, the Office of the Auditor General, and representatives of the business community, staff from the Legislature and the Governor's Office, as well as individuals in various public colleges and universities. Additionally, a resource group with wide representation from education, government, and business met on two occasions to discuss issues in this study (see Appendix A for a summary of those meetings). Finally, the Commission engaged the services of Dr. Gordon Van de Water as an external consultant to comment on the draft report and to provide a national perspective to the issues involved in accountability.

To respond to the proviso for the study, the Program Committee reviewed the accountability plans submitted in 1991 by the Board of Regents and in 1992 by the State Board of Community Colleges since those were the documents in place at the time of the legislative directive. Concurrently, the Committee requested copies of a sample of three university accountability plans and six community college accountability plans for review. The evaluation of these documents was conducted within the context of the systems' missions and goals and the State's mission for postsecondary education. The Commission acknowledges and appreciates the participation and cooperation of staff from the Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges as well as institutional representatives throughout the study.

The Commission firmly endorses an accountability system for public education in Florida. In its review of current accountability requirements at the system level and accountability reports at the institutional level, the Commission raised several concerns about the adequacy of existing accountability practices for Florida's postsecondary institutions. The initial reports submitted in response to present statutory requirements for accountability will not provide meaningful improvement in institutional effectiveness or respond adequately to policy leaders' concerns with critical statewide educational priorities. *Meaningful accountability activities among the colleges and universities of Florida should support positive institutional change and provide assurance to the citizens of the State that the institutions are fulfilling the mission of the postsecondary education system.* Thus, the primary purpose of accountability should be to foster improvement at the institutional level. A second, yet significant, purpose is to provide information to state-level policy makers. This report

outlines a comprehensive accountability process founded on these dual purposes of accountability and proposes recommendations to support such a process.

Background

Accountability and assessment dominated national education issues in the decade of the 80s. A 1984 national report, *Involvement in Learning*, recommended that institutions design and implement systematic programs for assessing student knowledge, capacities, and skills developed in academic and co-curricular programs. This was closely followed in 1985 by a report from the Association of American Colleges suggesting that states hold colleges and universities accountable for demonstrating effectiveness in the areas of students, programs, and faculty. There is little indication that the intensity of the accountability movement will abate in the 90s. Dissatisfaction with higher education has increased, fueled by budgetary restrictions as well as concerns such as fiscal accountability, the cost of a college education, faculty productivity, academic bureaucratic structures, and the quality of student performance.

Nationally, state-level efforts to address accountability and assessment concerns have ranged widely, from little oversight to mandated annual accountability reporting on several identified performance standards. For example, among the 15 states comprising the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), nine have an annual comprehensive accountability report requirement from their legislatures; four others incorporate accountability reporting in their planning process or master plan (Southern Regional Education Board, 1993).

In Florida, the level of activity related to accountability has increased significantly the past few years. The 1991 Legislature passed benchmark accountability legislation for

postsecondary education as well as for the K-12 sector. These are discussed further in the next chapter. Briefly, statutes required the boards to submit accountability plans and annual accountability reports. Legislation also mandated that the Regents and the members of the State Board of Community Colleges conduct an annual evaluation of the performance of the Chancellor of the State University System and the Executive Director of the State Board of Community Colleges as well as the presidents in each of those systems in achieving the performance goals established in their respective accountability plans.

Other legislation passed in 1991 related to State University System accountability required the Auditor General to conduct an assessment of the SUS accountability plan. The Auditor General's Office also completed a similar assessment of the CCS accountability plan. Finally, the House Higher Education Committee conducted an interim report project to oversee the implementation of initiatives from the 1991 and 1992 sessions related to improving oversight and increasing management flexibility of postsecondary education. Among the project's objectives were to assess the adequacy of the accountability process implementation plan for the community colleges and to monitor implementation of the plan for the 1992-93 fiscal year. Findings and recommendations from the report, *Management Reform and Accountability in Higher Education*, are presented in Chapter II.

The Commission discussed accountability as it examined assessment policy for postsecondary education in its 1992 report, *Outcomes Assessment in Postsecondary Education*. In reviewing assessment policies in Florida, the report examined existing state-level outcomes assessment policies and practices for postsecondary education relating to mandatory testing, reporting requirements on student performance, newly legislated accountability

plans, and program review requirements. The report noted that Florida public colleges and universities engage in on-going activities--such as accreditation and program review--at several levels that support accountability through internal assessment of institutional effectiveness.

Continued interest in accountability resulted in several items in the 1993 General Appropriations Act, including additional funding to the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) for a microcomputer version of the Student Data Base and to the community colleges for a degree audit system. The SBCC also received funds to continue development of the Personnel (staff) Data Base. The State University System Teaching and Departmental Incentive Program received an appropriation to recognize, promote and stimulate high quality and productive teaching.

This chapter contained contextual background information relative to where the State is currently in accountability. Chapter II responds directly to proviso for this study and presents an analysis of accountability in the State University System and the Community College System. Chapter III introduces the Commission's proposal for conceptualizing accountability on the basis of a dual purpose. Finally, Chapter IV presents issues and recommendations grounded in the findings from the Commission's activities and its perception of how accountability should be viewed for Florida's postsecondary institutions.

II. ACCOUNTABILITY: THE PRESENT

One of the purposes of this study as described in proviso is to review and evaluate the accountability plans in public postsecondary education as they relate to the mission and goals of each system and its respective institutions as well as the goals as articulated by the Legislature. This chapter reviews accountability activities that occurred between 1991 and 1993 in the two systems in order to provide a context for following chapters and to fulfill study requirements.

Legislation mandating specific system-level accountability measures for the State's public community colleges and universities was passed by the 1991 Legislature (see Appendices B and C). Legislative intent in both instances was to improve management as well as accountability; statutory language calls for the accountability process to provide for systematic, ongoing assessment or evaluation. In the case of the universities, the emphasis is on evaluation of quality and effectiveness, while for the community colleges, the emphasis is on quality as well as instructional and administrative efficiency and effectiveness.

State University System

In response to the initial accountability legislation in 1991, the Board of Regents established a task force to draft an accountability plan for the State University System. The plan was submitted to the Governor and Legislature on October 1, 1991. As stipulated in legislation, the plan provided a timetable to identify specific performance standards and related goals to be implemented each year, with full implementation of the accountability process by December 1993. In addition to the accountability plan, the Regents were required to submit an annual accountability report beginning December 1992. The annual report is to provide

information on the implementation of performance standards and achievement of performance goals.

The October 1991 SUS accountability plan identifies the purpose of evaluation as a means of gaining perspectives "on a complex process to be sure that it is operating well and is meeting the needs of its constituencies as it fulfills the goals set for it by the State" (p. 5). The report also notes that although the legislation called for monitoring performance at the system level in each of the major areas of instruction, research, and public service, "the nine measures for university accountability...focus principally on undergraduate instruction. None of these measures is directed primarily towards graduate and professional education, to say nothing of research or service" (p. 8). The SUS report further states that the initial accountability plan "should be viewed as just the first phase in an evolutionary process that will eventually encompass the entire mission of our State University System" (p. 9).

As part of the university accountability process, the Office of the Auditor General was required to: 1) evaluate the extent to which the performance standards included in the plan were valid, reliable, and could be measured; 2) assess controls and procedures to be established to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the performance standards and supporting data files to be used as the basis for measuring the progress toward accomplishment of the performance goals; 3) evaluate the year established by the SUS as the baseline year; and 4) assess the basis of the weighted value formula for each performance standard. The Auditor General's report found that the performance standards were acceptable measures for evaluating university performance and the data files for three measures were accurate and consistent.

The report noted as a weakness in the Plan that several of the "goals" were not clearly linked to the performance measures. The evaluation also stated that while none of the measures in statute address research or service, "the statutes did not restrict the SUS from addressing universities' research and service functions" (p. iv). The Auditor General recommended that the Legislature continue to provide oversight of the development of the accountability process.

Within the context of the 1991 accountability legislation, the SUS accountability plan responds to each of the nine measures. The report identifies the data bases to be utilized for the measures and proposes goals. A major shortfall of the plan, however, lies in the "goals" themselves. Several of the "goal statements" are less goals than they are specific objectives to be reached (e.g., "Increase by 1993 the production of teachers by 50% over production levels for the 1987-88 base year in order to provide at least 60% of Florida's teachers") or specific activities to be conducted (e.g., "Identify any program granting fewer than three degrees per year over the previous five-year period"). "Goal" is an oft-used term to signify an end or a target to strive toward. In a state- or institutional-level plan it is important to clearly distinguish among terms so that everyone understands where the system or institution is going and how it plans to get there. The lack of clarity in the SUS 1991 plan and the varied interpretations of a critical term such as goal undermined the effectiveness of the plan in communicating the system's direction and in responding to the purposes of accountability.

The Board of Regents and its staff have recognized these weaknesses and submitted a revised plan for submission with the annual accountability plan in December 1993 with structural changes to improve on the 1991 format and content. The SUS Accountability

Committee adopted the goals from the system's *Master Plan* and added two more goals. Additionally, other measures will be included in order to encompass the total mission of the SUS with emphasis not only on instruction, but also on research and service. The revised plan also incorporates a method for reviewing and analyzing university resources and expenditures related to the academic mission of each institution. Finally, the SUS Accountability Committee reports that future reports will present more summary data in order to better communicate performance.

The Commission also reviewed a sample of the individual institutional accountability plans submitted as part of the system's first accountability report in December 1992. Selection of three institutional plans (University of West Florida, Florida Atlantic University, and University of Florida) was intended to provide a cross section of institutions in terms of mission, geographic location, and size. The review revealed a few similarities among the three in general format of the plans. Each institution described itself and provided a mission statement. There was some distinction among mission statements. Goal statements varied considerably among the institutional samples. One institution listed no goal statements, a second institution had nine strategic goals with 179 objectives for the goals, and the third institution listed seven goals (beyond those identified in the SUS plan) with strategies, activities, and measures. Since these reports were submitted prior to the completion of the SUS *Master Plan*, the institutions were unable to relate their work to the System goals. Incorporating the Regents' *Master Plan* goals into the System accountability goals will also require the institutions to re-examine their goals to ensure symmetry with System goals.

Community College System

Accountability legislation passed in the 1991 session for the Community College System is similar in overall direction to legislation for the universities. The State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) was required to submit by January 1992 a plan addressing five issues: graduation rates, minority students, student performance, vocational placement rates, and student progression. The plan was to provide a timetable identifying issues to be addressed each year, with full implementation by December 1994.

Legislation also required an interim annual report on results of initiatives taken during 1992 and those proposed for 1993. Noting that the first report submitted in 1992 is "an interim step," the *Florida Community College System 1992 Accountability Report* presents outcome measures for the issues listed in statute. The report states that these five "core" outcome measures address the primary mission and functions of the Community College System but acknowledges that there are other issues which could be considered as part of the accountability process and which may be added. The report also recognizes numerous other processes (e.g., program review, institutional effectiveness, and "student right to know") that address the issues of accountability. This introductory report explains that the document leads into the beginning of "Phase II" of the process, which involves developing plans to improve performance on the outcome measures. The report defines the five measures for retrieval purposes and further breaks down each measure into several components to clarify which data will be used in reporting.

Following submission of the System accountability plan, the Office of the Auditor General issued an evaluation of the plan and the House of Representatives' Committee on Higher Education conducted an interim project

involving the plan. The Auditor General's evaluation found that the SBCC had not linked the performance measures to the System goals nor were the outcome measures linked to systemwide or institutional benchmarks that could be used to indicate whether the institutions were achieving established objectives. Among the report's recommendations was that the Legislature, with the assistance of the SBCC, establish input, output, and efficiency measures to evaluate the efficiency of the System.

The House of Representatives' Committee on Higher Education undertook an interim project to oversee the implementation of initiatives from recent legislative sessions related to improving oversight and increasing management flexibility of postsecondary education. The House report identified the lack of systemwide goals and objectives as a weakness. Additionally, this report found that the plan lacked detail on procedures for collection of the data by the colleges and transmittal to the Division of Community Colleges. The House report recommended that the plan's outcome measures be integrated into the System's *Master Plan*; another recommendation called for guidelines for the development of institutional accountability progress plans which include goals, objectives, and strategies to improve the student outcomes associated with the accountability measures.

The Commission's review found that the Community College System document responds to sections of the enabling statute, but it falls short in meeting legislative intent of outlining a "management and accountability process...which provides for the systematic, ongoing improvement and assessment of the improvement of the quality and efficiency" of the System. Staff point out that this is an interim report designed to meet the reporting requirements enumerated for the January 1, 1992 deadline. The "annual interim report"

required in December 1992 and thereafter will provide "results of initiatives taken during the prior year and the initiatives and related objective performance measures proposed for the next year". Recent meetings of the Community College System Accountability Implementation Committee indicate, however, that the interim report due December 1993 will propose adoption of the eight strategic goals from the System's *Master Plan*. The report will suggest benchmark objectives for the goals; data collected on the five measures in statute will provide a baseline for improvement purposes.

A sample of the individual community college accountability plans submitted in September 1993 were also reviewed. Six institutional plans (Broward Community College, Daytona Beach Community College, Edison Community College, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, Pasco-Hernando Community College, Pensacola Junior College) were selected to produce representation in terms of mission (designation as a vocational center), geographic location, size, and degree audit capability. The overall format used by the community colleges was similar, with each institution providing its personalized goals and strategies, supplemented with data when available. Institutions, for the most part, did not include a mission statement in the plan. Surprisingly, few of the plans relate their goals and strategies to the System's *Master Plan* strategic goals, even though the System plan was well advanced before the institutions were asked to submit their plans. This chronology of events raises the question of how the System and the institutions will reconcile their separate plans to achieve an integrated, cohesive accountability process that will illustrate and document how the 28 colleges contribute to the achievement of the System *Master Plan* strategic goals.

Summary of Findings

The Commission conducted a review of the systems' accountability plans submitted by the university system in 1991 and by the community college system in 1992 and a sample of the institutional plans as directed by legislative proviso for this study. Specific concerns are noted in the sections preceding this where each system is discussed individually. While the State University System and the Community College System plans are very different, the documents are useful in understanding how the institutions and systems perceived their responsibility for accountability.

Commission staff have observed activities in both systems to modify existing plans and thus address concerns raised in this and other evaluations. Both the State University System and the Community College System recently revised their systemwide accountability plans and require reporting on several data elements. The SUS plan, for example, now includes a resource and productivity accountability model organized by campus unit to display information on resources, expenditures and productivity together. Thus, changes in productivity can be evaluated relative to resources and how they were expended. As described in the December 1993 *Accountability Report*, the resource and productivity accountability model is intended for use by an individual university in examining resources to accomplish its unique mission, and universities should not be compared. The Community College System's 1993 *Interim Accountability Report* describes new initiatives and activities undertaken to strengthen the accountability process, including the development of new indicators of accountability, linking the accountability process with the system's five-year master plan process, and the establishment of an oversight committee on accountability and effectiveness. This interim report also relates

existing accountability measures to the system's mission statement. Additionally, the report references the Commission's 1993 *Master Plan*, noting that, to the extent that the Commission's challenges are also reflected in the State Board of Community Colleges' Master Plan, "the community colleges will be taking account of their performance by virtue of the outcome measures assessment process."

The findings noted here are based on the early plans but are of particular importance because of their relation with the next two sections of this report.

- ▶ System accountability plans did not acknowledge that there needs to be fundamental change in how education conducts its business.
- ▶ The system plans responded exclusively to the statutory language.
- ▶ Only in a limited way did the systems relate their plans to their respective missions.
- ▶ Many of the institutional plans were replete with data, but there was little analysis of the data. As initial plans, these documents were primarily concerned with establishing baselines for future data comparisons. Some of the community colleges did a very good job of examining these data within the context of their communities and their institutions.
- ▶ While several of the institutional plans listed strategies, few of the strategies were innovative or different from what has been done on the campus. For example, on licensure pass rates most institutions report they will review the test results and revise the courses and/or curricula as necessary. Experience with program reviews shows that the institutions have been doing this.

An additional concern that might have been addressed in the system and institutional plans

but was not is the acknowledgement of significant reform occurring within the public schools and the relationship between reform and accountability in the K-12 sector and accountability in the postsecondary sector. The Commission's new *Master Plan* states that postsecondary education will be directly impacted by *Blueprint 2000* in terms of student transition from high school, the assessment of student achievement, and role of credentialing in the preparation of teachers. The *Plan* suggests as a strategy that postsecondary education utilize the "Statement of Cooperation" that was signed by all education entities and adopted by the State Board of Education to attain one coordinated system of education in the State and to implement the tenets of *Blueprint 2000*.

Additionally, the recent Task Force on High School Preparation for Postsecondary Education and Employment recommended that entities from K-12 and postsecondary education "collaboratively describe the competencies of an entering-college freshman in terms of *Blueprint 2000* student performance standards. A mechanism for cross referencing the *Blueprint 2000* standards and competencies, integrated curricula, and applied courses with academic courses should be developed for the benefit of college and university personnel and employers who will need to interpret student achievement from student records and transcripts" (p. 8). The accountability plans and reports provide a mechanism for the Department of Education and the Legislature to periodically monitor the accountability of postsecondary education systems and institutions in assisting K-12 reform.

Examining these responses to accountability requirements was helpful, and significant human and fiscal resources were invested to develop the plans. But the Commission found that current accountability plans and practices have not fully succeeded in providing

comprehensive information on accountability to the public in a meaningful and useful format. Our concern now is to look forward and explore how best to answer a few key questions about how higher education is doing. Chapter III marks a shift in the expectations we have of accountability and the players at all levels.

III. ACCOUNTABILITY: THE FUTURE

Accountability legislation passed in 1991 quickly focused attention on an issue important to Legislators and their constituencies. Much accountability-related work to date has been in response to a need for fundamental information about higher education based on the kinds of data accessible through existing collection systems. This chapter suggests that we should adjust our expectations and map a direction founded in a holistic approach for accountability. To begin, the Commission interprets the public's concern with accountability through two questions:

- (1) How can institutions improve on what they are doing?
- (2) How will the Legislature and the general public know the institutions are using available resources effectively and efficiently?

Rising discomfort nationwide and statewide with these questions indicates that public doubt exists that our colleges and universities are doing what they should be doing and that they are using scarce resources effectively and efficiently. "The climate in which higher education operates has changed, probably substantially, and certainly not for the better" (Pew Higher Education Research Program, 1991). Derek Bok, President Emeritus of Harvard University, expresses sentiments found in other media in recent years:

Notwithstanding the improvements that may have taken place in the quality of undergraduate education in this country, the public has finally come to believe quite strongly that our institutions--particularly our leading universities--are not making the education of students a top priority... University leaders have tended to be silent on this issue... They have not offered the American people a compelling vision of what

we are trying to accomplish for our students (1992, pp. 15-16).

Writing in 1991, the year that Florida's accountability legislation passed, the Pew Higher Education Research Program summed up what, in effect, was occurring in Florida: "...institutions of higher education can expect less of the public purse and more of public intervention...the public, in the form of regulators, budget officers, state and federal legislative staffs, higher education commissions, accrediting bodies, and emboldened boards of trustees, will want a seat at the table. In some states and at some institutions, they may even insist that they own the table." (Pew Higher Education Research Program, 1991, p. 6A).

Calls for Change

Accountability provides an opportunity as well as a challenge for change--through the system and institutional plans and reports, the public system of postsecondary education has an opportunity to reassert its ability to define and manage its direction. During 1993, three major coordinating/governing bodies for Florida's postsecondary education system completed five-year *Master Plans* with policy statements that will help define direction and manage change. A principal premise in the Commission's five-year master plan, *Challenges, Realities, Strategies*, is that our public colleges and universities cannot continue to operate as they have in the past:

If Florida is to continue to provide access to quality postsecondary education, policymakers, administrators, faculty, and students will have to abandon the notion that new revenues alone will solve all of our problems.

The *Master Plan* identifies three challenge areas where change and leadership are most needed: use of educational resources, economic and human resource development, and management and finance. In each of these focus areas, the emphasis is on institutions examining their strengths and using resources efficiently and effectively--in many instances, this also means looking for better, perhaps different, ways of conceptualizing and managing what we are about.

For example, recent research suggests that a significant change has occurred in higher education in the expectations students have of their colleges and universities. Results of campus interviews nationally during 1993 as part of a study of undergraduate values and beliefs show that:

nontraditional students do not want the relationships undergraduates historically have had with the colleges. They are looking for something very different...The relationship these students want with their college is like the one they already have with their banks, supermarkets, and the other organizations they patronize. They want education to be nearby and to operate during convenient hours--preferably around the clock. They want easy, accessible parking, short lines, and polite and efficient personnel and services. They also want high-quality products but are eager for low costs. They are very willing to comparison shop--placing a premium on time and money. They are seeking a stripped-down version of college without student affairs, extracurricular activities, residence life,...the proliferation of specialty courses faculty like to teach, the research apparatus, museums...and the expansive physical plant that constitute a college today." (Levine, 1993, p. 4)

In describing higher education's "emerging new majority," other authors note that, despite

their numbers, "they have had almost no impact on the nation's collective image of what college is about--of the purpose of a higher education" (Pew Higher Education Research Program, 1991, p. 3A). In Florida, data show an increasing average age among enrolled students and a growing number of part-time students in most postsecondary institutions. Clearly, not all of our students fit the description above or want their university or community college to function as a bank or supermarket. The critical element in this scenario, however, is that the colleges and universities understand who their students are, what they represent, what they want and need, and then ensure that the mission, goals, and management of the institution address how the college or university can meet those requirements most effectively and efficiently.

To illustrate, the new university in Southwest Florida reflects a traditional approach in that its primary mission is undergraduate education. The university's mission statement, however, also contains unique elements:

- a "weekend college" program will be offered in selected subject areas to enable students to earn complete degrees solely through evening and weekend study;
- an important element of the university will be the variety of alternative learning and teaching systems; parts of many degree programs will be available via television courses, computer-assisted instruction, and competency-based exams;
- specialized faculty will be available to advise students to establish individualized learning plans by selecting one or more of the options;
- undergraduate students will have a mentor/advisor who will guide them during a

senior project or paper, in order to synthesize the work done in the curriculum and prepare the students to organize ideas from across disciplines in a final research document;

- graduate education and continuing education will primarily serve the needs of part-time working individuals whose professional growth will demand programs arranged at convenient times, places, and in modules to accommodate their employment.

Accountability for Institutional Improvement

Existing legislation mandating accountability for postsecondary education addresses system accountability and enumerates several performance measures for the university system and for the community college system. The Commission believes that, while system-level accountability is important, the principal purpose of accountability should be to foster institutional improvement in order to achieve the State's mission for postsecondary education and to impact the student's college experience in a positive manner.

Accountability which focuses on institutional improvement places the major responsibility for assessment and reporting at the campus level. For an accountability policy with this overriding purpose to function, there must be minimal interference or guidance from state-level entities. Yet, the onus of establishing that postsecondary education institutions are achieving the State's mission "to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses, and to serve and stimulate society by developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities; scientific, professional, and technological expertise; and a sense of purpose" (Section 240.105(2), Florida Statutes) falls directly on

the campuses. Individually and collectively, the colleges and universities are responsible for fulfilling this mission; accountability requires the institutions to assess their ability and performance in accomplishing the mission and, concurrently, identify areas to address in order to improve performance.

The challenge for institutions is to adequately assess their ability and performance. Fundamental to accountability for institutional improvement is the formulation of institutional goals supported by distinctive objectives and activities. Once these are established, specific measures are assigned to the goals and objectives in order to evaluate the level of goal achievement. Thus, institutional accountability requires several objectives and measures, with some variation allowed in those measures across institutions because of their differing missions and goals. While each institution would report on state-level accountability measures, the college or university would also have other measures to evaluate its institutional goals. Performance measures for institutional improvement may vary from those in statute or those needed for systemwide reporting. Institutional improvement should be comprehensive and address all facets of the institution, but with emphasis on the teaching/learning process and student performance.

Colleges and universities should have flexibility in designing their individual responses to accountability. Nonetheless, accountability for institutional improvement should be comprehensive, with foundations in a plan comprised of common characteristics such as:

1. Be linked to the State's mission for postsecondary education as well as the institutional mission.
2. Be related to specific institutional goals.

3. Incorporate multiple assessment measures collected over time.
4. Be systematic by providing routinely collected and analyzed information.
5. Allow for comparison of an institution's current and past performance, for comparisons among Florida institutions and with peer institutions, as well as for comparison against predetermined goals.
6. Evaluate the process as well as the inputs and the products.
7. Include assessment of the achievement of general education objectives by undergraduate students.
8. Encourage faculty, student, staff, and community participation in both planning and implementation.
9. Demonstrate that assessment results have been incorporated in institutional decision making at the departmental or unit level.
10. Demonstrate that budget requests are linked to improvement plans--that the institution targeted areas for improvement and reallocated its resources to impact those target areas.
11. Be available to the public in an understandable format.

Accountability for institutional improvement should capitalize on existing data collection and reporting and allow for elimination of duplicative or unnecessary reporting requirements. Public colleges and universities have had assessment practices in place for years. For example, faculty analyze student performance in order to evaluate teaching methods, materials, and course content; administrators examine data to determine

instructional costs; and student records contain numerous kinds of information. Institutions conduct different types of on-going activities which generate relevant data for accountability and assessment purposes:

- ▶ Mandatory student testing -- entry-level placement tests are required of all degree-seeking students; CLAST is required of all AA degree-seeking students and for admission to the upper division of a state university program.
- ▶ Reporting requirements -- feedback reports, articulation reports, Gordon Rule are among the periodic reporting requirements.
- ▶ Accountability plans -- system-level accountability plans and reports require institutional status reports annually.
- ▶ Program review -- required by statute every five years on each major program; focus of these review activities is on program improvement.
- ▶ Accreditation -- regional accreditation now emphasizes outcomes assessment; several specialized accreditation associations are also moving toward increased emphasis on student performance.

To recognize institutional initiatives and progress with improvement goals, the State might consider expanding the use of incentive funding related to accountability improvement goals for the State University System and the Community College System. For example, the 1993 Legislature endorsed the performance reward approach for faculty and departments with \$5,000,000 in funding for the Board of Regents to create the State University System Teaching and Departmental Incentive Program. Awards are made on a competitive basis to recognize, promote and stimulate high quality and productive teaching. A general accountability incentive program could be



designed where individual institutions are rewarded for meeting specified objectives for state-level priority areas such as access, undergraduate education, quality, and productivity, and for achieving institutional improvement goals. As the Commission suggested in its report, *Outcomes Assessment in Postsecondary Education* (1992), enhancement funding vis a vis incentive (performance) funding and competitive grants would provide the flexibility and oversight for support that targets institutional effectiveness. Challenge grants, a form of incentive funding, have proven effective in Florida and include the Eminent Scholars Program.

A State-level Accountability Process

An important element in this study has been determining what a state-level accountability process for postsecondary education should look like. This accountability process would then provide the context for evaluating the plans of the State University System and the Community College System and monitoring the effectiveness of the State's postsecondary education systems to assure that institutions do demonstrate improvement.

In its *Outcomes Assessment* report, the Commission emphasized that the citizens of Florida need assurance that the funds invested in the State's postsecondary education system are being utilized in the most effective manner to provide the greatest return on available resources. The Commission also found that Florida has no comprehensive assessment policy--or process--at the state level, although there are several related activities such as the rising junior test (College Level Academic Skills Test, CLAST), mandatory entry-level testing for postsecondary education, and the Grade Ten Achievement Test. Concurrently, there has been no agreement on a small number of statewide priorities, but there are master plans for all of postsecondary education as well as the systems. At the

institutional level, on-going, systematic and comprehensive assessment for the purpose of evaluating overall institutional effectiveness traditionally has not been a priority at most colleges and universities, although changes in accreditation requirements and systemwide initiatives have increased the emphasis on identification and use of assessment procedures.

Legislation passed in 1991 identified several characteristics of accountability in the State University System as well as in the Community College System. Statute suggests that a systemwide accountability process for the state universities will:

- provide for the systematic, ongoing evaluation of quality and effectiveness in the State University System;
- monitor performance at the system level in each of the major areas of instruction, research, and public service;
- provide for the adoption of systemwide performance standards and performance goals for each standard;
- produce an annual accountability report;
- include a plan for the implementation of the accountability process, with a timetable identifying specific performance standards and related goals as well as identification of specific data files to be used to substantiate achievement of performance goals;
- include, at a minimum, data on nine specified performance standards.

A statewide accountability process for the State's community colleges will:

- provide for the systematic, ongoing improvement and assessment of the

improvement of the quality and efficiency of the State Community College System;

- contain a plan to improve and evaluate the instructional and administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the State Community College System, and
- address five specified performance standards.

The elements of accountability currently identified in statute provide a solid foundation for systemwide evaluation. To further define parts of the process, the Commission developed some corollary points. First, we distinguish between accountability and assessment. For the purposes of this report, accountability is viewed as a demonstration that established standards have been met. This involves providing information in response to requests from external agencies (e.g., state government, accrediting agencies, regulatory or licensing agencies) as well as internal sources (e.g., boards, presidents, advisory groups, students). Assessment, on the other hand, involves producing and using data and other types of information to evaluate processes and procedures to determine how well the unit performed. The results of *assessment* activities can be used to respond to *accountability* requirements.

Based on current legislation and on our perception of important characteristics of accountability, we understand a plan to be a document that sets out a framework for operationalizing a concept. A plan is a dynamic, evolving document, which needs periodic review and possibly revision. Frequent modifications in a plan, however, will create confusion and frustration for those producing the information. An accountability plan, whether at the system or institutional level, would have common characteristics and explain common areas. (See Appendix F for suggested characteristics of a plan.) An

accountability report is different in format, yet draws on goals and other elements identified in the plan.

The Commission examined the existing activities related to accountability and found that a coherent, inclusive process was needed. Accountability at the state level should be based on a plan followed by periodic reporting. Based on discussions with institutional and sector representatives, experiences of other states, and review of the literature, the Commission determined that accountability should:

1. Foster institutional improvement.
2. Be based on the mission statement of the State's postsecondary education system.
3. Be related to a few specific state priorities.
4. Be related to Commission and system master plan goals.
5. Contain a few key measures for each priority.
6. Include information that shows system performance at a single point in time as well as changes in performance over time or trend information.
7. Allow for comparison with peer systems or states of a few key measures.
8. Include assessment of all institutional functions.
9. Evaluate the quality of the process as well as the inputs and the products.
10. Be reported to the public in an accessible and understandable format.

The table on the next page compares the ten proposed characteristics of a state-level accountability process with existing accountability legislation for the State University System and the Community College System. While several of the proposed characteristics are embodied in the legislation, others are not.

Since Florida encourages an "all one system" approach to education, the statewide mission of the postsecondary system should be reflected in the mission statements of the system members. Accountability for the system is tied to accountability of the member institutions. The mission of the State's postsecondary education system is central to the development of an accountability process, and the relationship between State, system, and institutional goals should be clear. (See Appendices D and E for mission statements.)

What has been lacking, however, is a succinct list of state priority areas based on the statutory mission statement. It is difficult for institutions to develop goals when different entities at the state level send different signals about what is important in higher education. Over the years, statewide priorities have been dispersed throughout Florida law. For example, the priority of enhancing access to higher education is reflected in financial aid policy, where statute indicates that state student financial aid be provided primarily on the basis of financial need, as well as in articulation policy, which guarantees graduates with an associate in arts degree a place in one of the State's public universities. Targeting a few priorities is essential since neither the State nor its institutions can afford to concentrate on everything all of the time--specific areas must be selected for focused attention. This is especially important when limited resources dictate improved productivity through efficient and effective management.

The Commission's new *Master Plan*, the master plans completed by the State University System and the Community College System, as well as the K-12 goals established in Blueprint 2000 have several issues in common that postsecondary education should address in the near future. State-level planning and policy recommendations for postsecondary education are also found in strategic plans prepared by the Department of Education as well as by the Office of the Governor. Major issues in the Department of Education's strategic plan for 1992-97 include:

1. Ensure opportunities for undergraduate education;
2. Improve the quality of undergraduate education; and
3. Improve the educational and non-educational experiences of students, enhance faculty research efforts, and develop reciprocal relationships.

The Governor's strategic plan for 1992-96 includes a priority for increased access to postsecondary education. Key topics found in these plans are *quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity* (see Appendix G). Thus, these topics should be leading candidates for accountability priority areas.

Once major priorities are articulated, a few key objectives and indicators or measures are then needed for the priorities. Indicators would present aggregated information; selected principal indicators would then be designated for public reporting. Broad dissemination of the results of a focused, composite accountability report on postsecondary education would ensure that the general public has access to the information. Publication of selected measures with an indication of progress toward achieving

**COMPARISON OF 1991 LEGISLATION WITH
PROPOSED STATE-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS**

Characteristics of State-level Accountability Process	1991 SUS Accountability Legislation	1991 CCS Accountability Legislation
1. Foster institutional improvement	Emphasis on <u>system</u>	Emphasis on <u>system</u> .
2. Be based on the mission statement of the State's postsecondary system.	No reference to State mission.	No reference to State mission.
3. Be related to a few specific state priorities.	Focus on specific measures, not general priorities.	Focus on specific measures, not general priorities.
4. Be related to Commission and system Master Plan goals.	Not directly related to any master plan goals.	Not directly related to any master plan goals.
5. Contain a few key measures for each priority.	9 measures; no reference to priority areas.	5 measures; no reference to priority areas.
6. Include performance at a single point in time and trends.	Requires annual report but no requirements on trend data.	Requires annual report but no requirements on trend data.
7. Compare with peer systems or states.	No provision for comparison with other systems or states.	No provision for comparison with other systems or states.
8. Include all institutional functions.	Requires monitoring of all major areas of instruction, research, and service; measures focus only on instruction. No direct analysis of general education.	No reference to institutional functions, but requires plan to improve instructional and administrative efficiency; measures only for student performance. No direct analysis of general education.
9. Evaluate inputs, process, output, and outcomes.	Of 9 measures, most are output; a few are outcomes and process.	Of 5 measures, each aspect (e.g., input) is represented.
10. Report to public in accessible and understandable format.	Requires annual report.	Requires annual report to Governor, Senate President, and House Speaker.

Source: Sections 240.214 and 240.324, Florida Statutes.

priorities related to those measures would respond to accountability and place relevant information in the hands of Floridians.

Identifying a few statewide priorities also facilitates cross referencing critical issues with budget issues--an increasingly important activity under accountability. A recent study by the Southern Regional Education Board reports that among the 15 member states only Tennessee has measures tied directly to budget consequences; Texas has mandated (but did not fund) a similar approach. The SREB found no direct connection between accountability reports and budgets in the remaining states, although reports may influence budget decisions. Relating budget to system-level activity has been a part of program review in Florida for several years. For example, statute requires that the results of program reviews in the State University System be tied to the university budget requests and quality indicators used during statewide university program reviews include resources available to support continuation of the programs.

Finally, the State must be prepared to hold all levels accountable and to evaluate the impact of the accountability process as public policy. A Southern Regional Education Board (1993) report poses several questions that should be considered as part of the State's evaluation of this accountability process:

- * Have state policies produced constructive and substantive educational changes at the campus level, or have campus responses been largely cosmetic and adaptive?
- * Has the implementation of state accountability policies led to increased awareness of, confidence in, and support of higher education?
- * Are political and educational leaders using the extensive accountability reporting?

* Do states have policies that support improvement in both favorable and unfavorable economic times, and do these policies survive changes in leadership at the executive level?

Accountability of state policy is an important component of a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the State's postsecondary education system.

Summary

This section has attempted to establish a transition between postsecondary education accountability over the past three years and a new perspective on accountability as a process involving the State, the systems, and the institutions. The Commission submits that the primary purpose of accountability should be institutional improvement. A secondary purpose should be provision of information for state-level policy makers. Based on the dual-purpose approach outlined in this chapter, the Commission presents specific recommendations in the following chapter.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 1993 Legislature directed the Commission to conduct a review and evaluation of the accountability plans in public postsecondary education. The review and evaluation were to relate the plans to the mission and goals of each system and its respective institutions as well as the goals as articulated by the Legislature. Additionally, the review and evaluation were to specifically address the extent to which the institutional and systemwide plans should be modified to provide for specific, measurable goals. Chapter II presented an analysis of the plans and related the plans to system and institution mission and goals. The review found that existing plans would not answer key concerns about improving educational quality, effectiveness, or efficiency. Chapter III introduced a design to define the accountability process more clearly at the institutional as well as the state level and discussed the implications of this approach. Chapter IV culminates the report with a discussion of selected issues and recommendations.

The Commission firmly endorses an accountability system for public education in Florida. However, it found that initial reports responding to current statutory requirements for accountability would not lead to improved management at the local level and provide for systematic, ongoing assessment. While systems and institutions responded to present statutory requirements and have expanded the measures in some areas, initial reports will not provide meaningful improvement in institutional effectiveness or respond adequately to policy leaders' concerns with critical statewide educational priorities. Continuing a direction set in the previous chapter, this section further develops a different level of expectations for accountability.

Institutional and State-level Accountability

Accountability provides assurance to the citizenry that our institutions are serving students and the general public by fulfilling the mission of the postsecondary education system, and accountability is key to achieving funding to continue that mission. State policy should reflect a comprehensive accountability process for Florida's public postsecondary system. The Commission found that existing accountability plans and practices would not answer key concerns about improving educational quality, effectiveness, or efficiency. A holistic design is needed to define the accountability process more clearly and achieve the purposes of fostering institutional effectiveness and providing performance information to state-level policy makers.

Recommendation:

- 1. State accountability policy for postsecondary education should be guided by the dual concerns of fostering institutional effectiveness and verifying that institutions are fulfilling the postsecondary mission specified in statute while making efficient and effective use of their resources.*

Monitoring and Reporting

Existing legislation includes system and institutional annual reporting on progress in implementing measures. Under the accountability process outlined in this report, the foundation of accountability is the statutory mission for postsecondary education; system as well as institutional goals and activities should relate to that mission. To ensure that the total process is integrated and to promote accountability of the process itself, a state-level review is needed on a periodic

basis of the accountability plans and reports from the university and the community college systems. Key questions to consider are whether state policies have resulted in constructive and substantive changes and whether the accountability policies have led to increased confidence in postsecondary education. Results of these periodic reviews would be used in making recommendations to the Legislature for various planning activities, including budgetary purposes. Further, it is important to ensure that accountability results are used for institutional improvement. Finally, the state-level review would produce information for the general public. Prospective students and parents should have ready access to a concise, understandable summary of the institution's goals and progress toward fulfilling those goals.

Recommendation:

2. *The State Board of Education and the Legislature should periodically review the systems' and institutions' accountability efforts for progress toward achieving statewide priorities of quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity for postsecondary education and the goals in the accountability plans.*

Accountability for postsecondary education should not be limited to the systems and the institutions. Support from state-level entities, particularly the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Legislature, through policy guidance and funding, are critical to the success of accountability. For example, will state-level entities receive and use accountability reports submitted by the institutions and the systems from the perspective of improving postsecondary education and achieving difficult goals? Will there be a commitment to continuity with accountability into the future, beyond immediate, short-term needs?

Recommendation:

3. *A comprehensive evaluation of accountability should include in its analysis those state-level bodies with the funding and policy-making authority to influence accountability.*

**Using the Budget Process to Support
Priorities and Accountability**

Fundamental to the accountability process and improved productivity is a clearly defined institutional mission statement. Accountability begins with the institutional mission statement and the goals to support that mission. The Commission's *Master Plan* (1993) cited this area with special concern since the lack of focus which characterizes most institutional missions has a detrimental effect on productivity. To further underscore the importance of focused mission statements, the *Master Plan* suggested that the university and community college systems use their master plans to ensure that the mission statements of their institutions allow for the most efficient use of available resources by prioritizing their responses to identified needs. Clearly defined missions and clearly defined operating principles are foremost in importance to ensure that resources and management structures are deployed in support of those respective missions.

Forces behind the strong drive for educational accountability in Florida and nationally include the growing demand for governmental service at all levels coupled with reductions in the State's fiscal resources to meet those demands. Relating accountability to the budget process is a key component of accountability and an objective that most states have sought, but few have achieved. The Commission's *Master Plan* supported redesign or restructuring for the allocation and use of state resources. One strategy proposed was to reinforce governing board and institutional

flexibility and decision making by modification of policies which impede flexibility. Additionally, the *Plan* encourages institutional analysis of resource and expenditure patterns at department level cost centers and internal allocation of resources in accordance with state and institutional priorities. Other strategies related to productivity were also suggested, including provision of incentive funding to attain specified objectives in each sector or across sectors.

Additionally, Florida does not currently have a few, clearly defined priorities expressed through a state policy for accountability. What the State does currently have are two broad missions statements for postsecondary education (one for the State and one for community colleges) and sets of measures in statute for accountability--one for the universities and one for the community colleges. In the absence of clear priorities, system and institutional goals may not correlate with state needs because institutions may have received different signals on what is important to legislators and the public.

Recent statewide master plans and strategic plans provide a rich resource for identifying priority areas for focused attention by the systems and the institutions. Common issues and concerns found in these plans include *quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity* (see Appendix F). System and institutional goals and objectives should be evaluated in terms of how they contribute to the enhancement of priority areas such as these; thus, the institutions should be partners in the on-going dialogue concerning how the priorities should be addressed. Since state-level priorities may change over the years, continual review and discussion among educational representatives and others is warranted, perhaps along the lines of the periodic enrollment estimating conferences.

Recommendations:

4. *Representatives of the Governor's Office, the Legislature, the Board of Regents, the State Board of Community Colleges, the Division of Vocational, Adult, and Community Education, the Commission on Education Reform and Accountability, the independent postsecondary sector, and the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission should meet annually to examine education issues, to coordinate efforts to achieve statewide priorities in higher education, to discuss progress toward achieving the priorities, and determine how this progress shall be monitored and communicated to the public.*

5. *Annual budget requests from the systems should specify how statewide priorities and system goals are reflected in the requests.*

6. *Any new funding formulas for postsecondary education should respond to and reinforce the state-level priorities identified in the State's master plans, strategic plans, and accountability documents.*

7. *The Legislature should provide incentive funding to assist the State University System and the Community College System as well as the institutions in attaining specified objectives for each of the state-level priority areas of quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity. Incentive funding based on established performance, rather than start-up support for new activities, would recognize recent achievements that foster the quality of undergraduate education, access/diversity, and productivity. For example, increasing the number of minority students who complete a degree in Florida is a statewide objective. Incentive funding for this objective would be awarded to institutions that have demonstrated*

an increase over time in the number of minority students who received an associate or bachelor's degree.

8. Individual institutions should target a portion of their existing funds for achievement of identified goals/objectives subject to external validation. The institution's annual accountability report would then explain how much was targeted, where the redirected funds were targeted, and the results of that effort.

Duplicative Reporting

It is important to acknowledge several on-going accountability-related activities at the system level for the colleges and universities. These include the annual State University System Performance Report; periodic statewide program reviews; an annual Fact Book displaying data on academic, fiscal, human, and physical resources; accreditation documents; as well as the annual accountability report. Much periodic reporting in the Community College System also relates to accountability, including Progress Toward Excellence reports, program reviews, accreditation documents, institutional effectiveness reports, articulation reports, and the Fact Book. Duplicative reporting is both unnecessary and resource consuming. To the extent possible, institutions and systems should be allowed to fold existing reporting requirements into the accountability report.

Recommendation:

9. The Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges should review existing reporting requirements to determine which of these are duplicated in the accountability report and thus should be eliminated from statute and rule.

Conclusion

Accountability should be an integral and continuous part of postsecondary education and another tool for educators and policy makers to use for informed decision making. Accountability should support education by drawing on information to respond to legitimate questions at various levels about what colleges and universities do and how well they do those things. The approach proposed in this report is based on the premise that a meaningful accountability process for postsecondary education must have as its primary purpose to foster positive change and enhance performance at the institution level. A secondary, yet significant, purpose is to provide information to state-level policy makers on key measures. These measures would serve as indicators of the State's progress in resolving statewide priority issues such as access to higher education.

This report proposes a dual purpose accountability process focusing on providing top-down leadership, not top-down management. As presented here, a comprehensive accountability process may be depicted as a pyramid-like structure: a large base representing the institutional level with several measures and a small piece at the top representing the state level with a few principal measures common to all institutions. Such a structure would provide information to the State, but institutions would retain flexibility in determining what is important to achieve their local goals and fulfill their mission.

By defining accountability in terms of what we are about in higher education as well as how we use our resources, the Commission seeks to continue to move toward a process that is meaningful to the public and to the

institutions. Fundamental to our success with accountability is accepting the premise that this is a dynamic, evolving area. It will undoubtedly be several years before the State and the institutions are fully engaged in an integrated accountability process. However, the external conditions and pressures surrounding postsecondary education will continue to demand attention to the need for such an accountability system.

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Appendix A

**SUMMARY POINTS FROM ACCOUNTABILITY STUDY
RESOURCE GROUP**

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PLANNING COMMISSION
Program Committee

Summary of Resource Group Meeting
August 18, 1993

- General consensus that the concept paper is moving in the right direction.
 - § The accountability statutes as they exist are inflexible--accountability, however, is a dynamic process.
 - § Starting from missions statements and goals is appropriate--this document needs to be broad enough to apply to all of postsecondary education's delivery systems.
 - § An accountability process should involve continuous improvement over time to achieve quality--state and institutional values should be aligned with the data elements.
 - § The measures in statute are not tied to the goals in the existing plans. Education must be able to show value added to the student's lives through the various data elements being tracked.

- The "all one system" approach needs to be practiced as well as espoused.
 - § Education does not act like one system now.
 - § Statewide accountability should include the independent sector; the State has become more involved both economically and legislatively with independent institutions.
 - § Statewide accountability should also include vocational postsecondary education offered through the school districts.

- Benchmarking is important.
 - § Benchmarking with peers must be done carefully--if everybody else is bad or not doing a good job, then what good is it to benchmark?
 - § There are some absolute standards that are critical for benchmarking purposes.
 - § A third way to benchmark is by continuous improvement over time. Higher education needs to show how the measures will be used to improve the process and outcomes. Until that's done, we won't make much progress.

§ A meaningful accountability system requires some financial incentives.

● An accountability process should be well-articulated.

§ The accountability process is currently disjointed and characterized by related independent activities: mandatory student testing, reporting requirements, program review, accreditation. Institutions spend much time on these and they have been in place a long time.

§ A systemic, effective accountability system means the on-going activities such as program review and accreditation are aligned or eliminated.

§ People perceive accountability as an add-on because that's the way we have traditionally done things out of Tallahassee.

§ Progress has traditionally been measured in terms of movement through the system instead of in terms of knowledge acquisition. Knowledge and skill acquisition should determine movement through the system.

● Accountability results have to be communicated in a meaningful way to the taxpayers.

§ Stakeholders in educational accountability include business, industry, and government.

§ The education system is not interrelated with other entities within the State--points of convergence are few or nonexistent.

§ The system-level and institutional leadership must have a role--the trustees and the regents. They're the ones that make a lot of the decisions.

§ The "public" for accountability is diverse--includes such groups as students, legislators, parents, business.

● A visual is needed to show the relationship of statewide, systemwide, and institutional accountability.

§ The delivery systems are currently required to have goals and objectives which are to be articulated through the systemwide master plan. The accountability process and plan does not clearly describe how these are being integrated into the accountability process.

Appendix B
SECTION 240.214, FLORIDA STATUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

240.214 State University System accountability process.—It is the intent of the Legislature that an accountability process be implemented which provides for the systematic, ongoing evaluation of quality and effectiveness in the State University System. It is further the intent of the Legislature that this accountability process monitor performance at the system level in each of the major areas of instruction, research, and public service, while recognizing the differing missions of each of the state universities. The accountability process shall provide for the adoption of systemwide performance standards and performance goals for each standard identified through a collaborative effort involving the State University System, the Legislature, and the Governor's Office. The accountability process shall be implemented in incremental phases, as follows:

(1) No later than December 31, 1991, and annually thereafter, the board shall submit to the Legislature an evaluation of the production of classroom contact hours at each university pursuant to s. 240.243. The evaluation must include a specific analysis of the contact-hour expectations resulting from the multiplication of the requirements of s. 240.243 by the instructional man-years generated through the legislative enrollment for-

mula. The analysis must, in addition, include the contact-hour expectations resulting from the multiplication of 84 percent of the positions provided for undergraduate enhancement by the contact-hour requirements of s. 240.243. The board may also conduct this analysis using alternative formulas. The board shall recommend to the Legislature any appropriate modifications to this section, s. 240.243, or other current policies. These recommendations shall be included in the annual accountability report submitted pursuant to subsection (3). The reports developed pursuant to this section shall be designed in consultation with the Legislature.

(2) By October 1, 1991, the Board of Regents shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, a plan for the implementation of the balance of the State University System accountability process. The plan shall be designed in consultation with the Legislature, the Governor's Office, and the Office of the Auditor General. The plan must provide a timetable that identifies the specific performance standards and related goals to be implemented each year and must provide for full implementation of the accountability process by December 31, 1993. The plan must also identify the data files that will be used to substantiate achievement of performance goals. If it is necessary to develop new data files or modify existing files, the plan must describe the content of such files and include a sample file format. The plan must include, at a minimum, data on the following performance standards:

- (a) Total student credit hours produced, by institution and by discipline.
- (b) Total number of degrees awarded, by institution and by discipline.
- (c) Total number of contact hours of instruction produced by faculty, by institution, rank, and course level.
- (d) Pass rates on professional licensure examinations, by institution.
- (e) Institutional quality as assessed by follow-up surveys of alumni, parents, clients, and employers.
- (f) Length of time and number of academic credits required to complete an academic degree, by institution and by degree.
- (g) Enrollment, progression, retention, and graduation rates by race, gender, and disability.
- (h) Student course demand analysis, and
- (i) Classroom utilization.

(3) Beginning December 1, 1992, the Board of Regents shall submit an annual accountability report providing information on the implementation of performance standards and achievement of performance goals during the prior year and initiatives to be undertaken during the next year. The accountability reports shall be designed in consultation with the Governor's Office, the Office of the Auditor General, and the Legislature.

History — s. 91-56

Appendix C

**SECTION 240.324, FLORIDA STATUTES
COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS**

240.324 Community college accountability process. —

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature that a management and accountability process be implemented which provides for the systematic, ongoing improvement and assessment of the improvement of the quality and efficiency of the State Community College System. Accordingly, the State Board of Community Colleges and the community college boards of trustees shall develop and implement a plan to improve and evaluate the instructional and administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the State Community College System. This plan must address the following issues:

(a) Graduation rates of AA and AS degree-seeking students compared to first-time enrolled students seeking the associate degree

(b) Minority student enrollment and retention rates.

(c) Student performance, including student performance rates on college level academic skills tests, mean grade-point averages for community college AA transfer students, and community college student performance on state licensure examinations.

(d) Job placement rates of community college vocational students.

(e) Student progression by admission status and program.

(f) Other measures as identified by the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission and approved by the State Board of Community Colleges

(2) By January 1, 1992, the State Board of Community Colleges shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a plan for addressing these issues. The plan must provide a specific timetable that identifies specific issues to be addressed each year and must provide for full implementation by December 31, 1994. Beginning December 31, 1992, the State Board of Community Colleges shall submit an annual interim report providing the results of initiatives taken during the prior year and the initiatives and related objective performance measures proposed for the next year. The initial plan and each interim plan shall be designed in consultation with staff of the Governor and the Legislature.

(3) Beginning January 1, 1993, the State Board of Community Colleges shall address within the annual evaluation of the performance of the executive director, and the boards of trustees shall address within the annual evaluation of the presidents, the achievement of the performance goals established in the community college accountability plan

History — 12 of 91-55

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Appendix D

SECTION 240.105(2), FLORIDA STATUTES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND MISSION

240.105 Statement of purpose and mission.—

(1) The Legislature finds it in the public interest to provide a system of higher education which is of the highest possible quality; which enables students of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of income to participate in the search for knowledge and individual development; which stresses undergraduate teaching as its main priority, which offers selected professional, graduate, and research programs with emphasis on state and national needs; which fosters diversity of educational opportunity, which promotes service to the public; which makes effective and efficient use of human and physical resources; which functions cooperatively with other educational institutions and systems; and which promotes internal coordination and the wisest possible use of resources.

(2) The mission of the state system of postsecondary education is to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses, and to serve and stimulate society by developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities, scientific, professional, and technological expertise, and a sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training, and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition. Basic to every purpose of the system is the search for truth.

History.—s 2 ch 79-222

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Appendix E
SECTION 240.301, FLORIDA STATUTES
COMMUNITY COLLEGES, MISSION

240.301 Community colleges; definition, mission, and responsibilities.—

(1) State community colleges shall consist of all public educational institutions operated by community college district boards of trustees under statutory authority and rules of the State Board of Education and the State Board of Community Colleges. A community college may be authorized by the State Board of Education to operate a department designated as an area vocational education school. A community college may be authorized by the State Board of Education, or through an agreement with a local school board, to operate an adult high school.

(2) The primary mission and responsibility of public community colleges is responding to community needs for postsecondary academic education and postsecondary vocational education. This mission and responsibility includes being responsible for:

(a) Providing lower level undergraduate instruction and awarding associate degrees.

(b) Preparing students directly for vocations requiring less than baccalaureate degrees. This may include preparing for job entry, supplementing of skills and knowledge, and responding to needs in new areas of technology. Vocational education in the community college shall consist of programs leading to an associate in science degree and other programs in fields requiring substantial academic work, background, or qualifications. A community college may offer vocational programs in fields having lesser academic or technical requirements if it is designated by the State Board of Education as an area vocational school or if such programs are coordinated with the local school district through an agreement with the school board.

(c) Promoting economic development for the state within each community college district through the provision of special programs, including, but not limited to, the:

1. Sunshine State Skills Program
2. Technology transfer centers.
3. Economic development centers.
4. Workforce literacy programs.

(3) A separate and secondary role for community colleges includes the offering of programs in

(a) Community educational services which are not directly related to academic or occupational advancement

(b) Adult precollege education, when authorized

(c) Recreational and leisure services

(4) Funding for community colleges shall reflect their mission as follows.

(a) Postsecondary academic and postsecondary vocational education programs and, when assigned to community colleges, adult precollege education programs shall have first priority in community college funding.

(b) Community education service programs shall be presented to the Legislature with rationale for state funding. The Legislature may identify priority areas for use of these funds.

(5) Community colleges are authorized to offer such programs and courses as are necessary to fulfill their mission and are authorized to grant associate in arts degrees, associate in science degrees, associate in applied science degrees, certificates awards, and diplomas. Each community college is also authorized to make provisions for the general educational development examination.

History.—s. 41 ch. 79-227 s. 14 ch. 83-376 s. 38 ch. 86-176 s. 3 ch. 87-376 s. 17 ch. 87-379 s. 2 ch. 88-292 s. 15 ch. 89-189 ss. 42 52 ch. 89-381 s. 62 ch. 91-136

APPENDIX F
CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN
AND AN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN AND AN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Characteristics of an Accountability Plan

- a) Genesis of the concept - Where did accountability come from? How does it relate to other, on-going or periodic institutional effectiveness activities?
- b) Purpose of the plan - Why is this plan necessary?
- c) Development of the plan - Who participated? When? How?
- d) General goals with more specific objectives, strategies, and measures - What are the overall goals that this accountability plan will address? What are our measurable objectives to achieve the goals? What activities/strategies will we use to reach the objectives? What measures will we use to determine if we achieved objectives and goals?
- e) Linkage with public schools accountability - How will accountability at this level relate to accountability and reform at the K-12 level?
- f) Action plan with timeframe - What will happen and when? Who is responsible?
- g) Feedback of the plan - How will the information generated by the plan be reinvested in the system or institution?
- h) Evaluation - How do we know our plan worked? What should we do to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan?

Characteristics of an Accountability Report

- a) Enumeration of goals and objectives - What were our objectives for this year? How did they contribute to the long and short-term goals?
- b) Data/information for the measures for each objective - What data do we have to explain our progress on the objectives?
- c) Analysis of the data - What do the data show regarding the objectives? Were our strategies/activities effective?
- d) Progress toward goals - How are we doing in achieving our goals?
- e) Improvement plan - What are we doing well? What do we need to do differently or better to enhance progress toward our goals?

APPENDIX G
MASTER PLAN PRIORITY AREAS

**MASTER PLAN PRIORITY AREAS
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PLANNING COMMISSION
BOARD OF REGENTS
STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
DIVISION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

<u>PEPC</u>	<u>BOR</u>	<u>SBCC</u>	<u>K-12</u>
1. Productivity	1. Quality of Undergraduate Education	1. Access	1. Readiness to Start School
2. Interdependence		2. Quality	
3. Economic and Human Resource Development	2. Access	3. Articulation and Collaboration Across Sectors	2. Graduation Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment
4. Diversity	3. State Funding		
5. Finance, Pricing, Incentives	4. Efficiency	4. Economic Development	3. Student Performance
	5. Critical State Problems	5. Human Resources	
	6. Public/Private Partnerships	6. Technology	4. Learning Environment
		7. Fiscal Stability	5. School Safety and Environment
		8. Institutional Effectiveness, Accountability, and Local Control	6. Teachers and Staff
			7. Adult Literacy