



INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION  
LEADERSHIP & POLICY

# ON BALANCE:

**Lessons in Effective Coordination from the  
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges  
– An Organizational Perspective**

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# Executive Summary

The challenge of producing the systemic changes that are needed to boost educational attainment and economic competitiveness across the country falls heavily on entities that coordinate public postsecondary institutions. Coordination of postsecondary education, whether of a single system of institutions or across an entire state, requires strategic leadership that draws on formal and informal authority to influence the priorities and activities of locally governed colleges and universities with strong traditions of autonomy. Many states are actively moving to improve postsecondary coordination – including the redesign of formal governance structures. This project was undertaken to help states improve the coordination function. It consists of a case study to tell the story of one coordinating board and a self-assessment tool that draws on the case study findings and aims to help other states better understand their own challenges and opportunities with respect to postsecondary coordination.

## Dimensions of Effective Coordination

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has a reputation as a coordinating entity that works effectively. Its reputation rests on three key accomplishments that can be viewed as three essential functions of an effective coordinating body.<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Mission focus.** It helps constituent institutions stay focused on a mission of value which, as a public organization, must be a mission that serves a valuable public purpose.
- 2. Large-scale policy.** It facilitates change at a large enough scale across the set of constituent institutions to make a difference in the accomplishment of the mission.
- 3. Relationships.** It balances the needs and interests of a variety of state and local participants and constituencies by mediating relationships effectively.

This case study explains, using a framework that can be applied to other states, how SBCTC has managed to accomplish these three essential functions of coordination.

## Explanatory Factors in Effective Coordination

We found the explanation of SBCTC's effectiveness in the relationship among three sets of factors that should be considered by anyone looking to help a coordinating entity perform the three essential functions noted earlier.

**State political and economic context.** The political culture of a state shapes expectations about the role of government, the degree of centralization of power, the level of legislative oversight and the function of interest groups – expectations that affect how postsecondary education operates. These cultural dimensions of state contexts change slowly if at all. Economic aspects of a state's context may change more readily as industry sectors shrink and grow, state fiscal circumstances improve or worsen, and new economic arrangements are introduced.

**Institutional design.** Coordinating entities have certain formal powers by design – and the design of institutions reflects the state's culture. Design elements, or formal governance structures and rules, can be changed, given sufficient time and political will. Many states are making or considering such changes.

**Organization and leadership strategies.** The leaders of coordinating entities are constrained by culture and structure and must devise strategies accordingly. Organizational strategies are more or less effective depending on their conformance to the expectations for performance inherent in the culture and the governance structures. The best formal structures can be wasted, or undermined, by poor leadership and poor choice of strategies. Conversely, gifted leadership can overcome serious deficits in formal power. Unless the formal design is so flawed that even gifted leaders can't make it work, attending to organizational leadership offers more and shorter-term opportunities to increase effectiveness of the coordinating function.

<sup>1</sup> For concise statements of the critical capacities for postsecondary coordination, see the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2005, July). *The Need for State Policy Leadership. State Capacity for Higher Education Policy: A Special Supplement to National Crosstalk*. San Jose, CA: Author; and Davies, G. (2011, July/August). *Changing Roles. Change Magazine*, p. 46.

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## Summarizing Success Factors for Washington's State Board

Here we summarize the full case study findings by noting how the three sets of explanatory factors help account for SBCTC's success in achieving the three essential functions. We emphasize that it is the way that SBCTC worked strategically to align these three sets of factors, not the specific details of the Washington situation, that offers lessons for other states.

### State Context

**Populist state culture.** The Washington state culture values local autonomy with collaboration. People generally expect the colleges to work together for the common good of the state. People within the college system appreciate the benefits of working together, even knowing they don't always get the outcomes they want.

**Part-time legislature.** The legislature has generally been comfortable letting the college system drive the policy agenda. The legislature is part-time and is not subject to term limits. This may help explain why local boards of trustees have not become politicized as happens in some states where they are used as stepping stones to public office.

**Economic dependency on two-year colleges.** The public two-year sector is large relative to the university sector. When the severe economic downturn struck in the 1980s, the system was convincingly able to position itself as the solution to the jobs crisis.

**Continuity of political party of governor.** The state has had a series of democratic governors since 1985, which may have helped foster a clear and consistent SBCTC mission, given the governor's authority to appoint members of the State Board and the local boards of trustees.

### Institutional Design

**Broad fiscal powers.** SBCTC has significant control over resources. There is a single budget allocation to the college system. SBCTC has authority to decide on its own share for coordination, to determine the basis for allocations to colleges, and to use resources to shape college priorities. It is not simply a vehicle for passing state allocations on to colleges.

**Broad policy-setting authority.** SBCTC has been assigned broad authority to develop policy with minimal regulatory constraints.

**Unified political appointing power.** The governor appoints all members of the State Board and of the 30 local boards of trustees, reducing the likelihood of competing local agendas that would impede systemwide policy adoption.

**SBCTC is not a "state agency."** The legislature designed SBCTC more as part of the college system than as a state agency. This has helped position it as a facilitator (rather than a regulator) to help the colleges do what they cannot do alone. SBCTC has broad authority to determine the size, composition, duties, and salaries of its staff and uses that authority to assemble the expertise it needs to facilitate a policy agenda.

**Encompassing mission to serve adults.** Adult basic education, General Educational Development (GED), developmental education, transfer, and workforce development missions are all assigned to SBCTC, making it easier for the college system to set a clear mission to improve educational attainment for Washingtonians.

# Executive Summary

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## Organizational Leadership

**Relentless focus on a mission of public value.** Since the late 1980s, when the then-executive director mobilized the college system to present itself as the solution to the recession, the SBCTC has been clear and consistent about its singular mission to educate Washingtonians for good jobs. They have bolstered their case with strategic use of data and communications. SBCTC takes full advantage of the collective power of the colleges and their connections with legislators in every district. Emphasis is placed on local trustees and college presidents localizing the system message in their own contexts.

**Continual cultivation of support from key constituencies.** SBCTC has evolved myriad routines to keep external stakeholders well informed about the work of the system and the priorities of lawmakers. Prior to the recent dissolution of the statewide Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), SBCTC cultivated a three-way partnership on state-level issues to include the heads of the Council of Presidents (representing the universities) and the HECB. The SBCTC gained the support of the business community in the 1990s when the system committed to demonstrate the outcomes of its workforce training programs as a condition of receiving a portion of unemployment insurance tax receipts.

**Policy strategists more than program implementers.** SBCTC has used its hiring authority to emphasize professional staff with expertise in policy and strategy. Policy associates are paid more than program administrators and are expected to think “outside the box” to anticipate challenges and opportunities and the appropriate policy responses. SBCTC leadership sets aside time to think about policy and strategy in most meetings, taking care not to have its agenda dominated by crises and short-term problem solving.

## **Extensive collaborative and shared decision making.**

Despite significant formal powers granted to SBCTC over resources and policy, an elaborate structure of shared decision making has evolved under which substantive decision-making power is shared with the colleges, who exercise them through a nonprofit organization. This organization has an elaborate and highly efficient structure of committees, commissions, and councils that actively engage broad sectors of college administration in decision making for the college system. SBCTC staffs all of the committees, commissions, and councils to ensure that everyone has the same information and is working toward common purposes. SBCTC leadership stresses the collaborative culture to the point where presidents and others who find they don't match the culture typically leave of their own accord.

**Strategic use of data.** A strong data capacity, developed in the 1980s, has helped the SBCTC define and communicate its priorities to policymakers. By framing performance shortfalls as issues needing attention, the Board was able to acquire and direct resources to address important state priorities. It has also used data strategically to build internal consensus around its mission and to set priorities. The strong data capacity supports the strong orientation toward policy and strategy.

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## Strategic Alignment

SBCTC has excelled in achieving alignment across these three categories. Its leadership has been strategic in understanding the state context and the Board's formal powers, and in knowing what can and cannot be changed and what can be adapted in order to best fulfill the mission. Balancing state and local needs and interests has been an equally important and impressive part of the success story. Achieving alignment and balancing interests are highly state-specific and are moving targets – as circumstances change, it may be necessary to realign and rebalance. In Washington, changes are indeed threatening the prevailing balance and a new equilibrium has not taken hold.

## Self-Assessment

The self-assessment instrument at the end of this report is designed to get users to think about the relative strengths and weaknesses, or the assets and deficits, that are facing a state with regard to postsecondary coordination. It is akin to an environmental scan in traditional strategic planning. It is not designed to produce a quantifiable score but to facilitate honest assessment about a state's political and economic context, the prevailing governance structures, and the capacities within the coordinating organization. Users are encouraged to think in terms of assets and deficits both within and across the three "buckets" of state context, institutional design, and organizational leadership. Changes in some areas may be more attainable than in others and improvements in one area might be able to compensate for deficits in others. The findings are highly state-specific and there are no right answers.

# Setting the Stage for the Case Study

Global economic competitiveness requires successful higher education. A national focus on college completion has generated research, experimentation, and knowledge about what kinds of programs and services can improve student success for the populations served in broad access institutions, including community and technical colleges. But generating knowledge about effective practices may be the easier part of this national agenda. A bigger challenge lies in implementing change at a large enough scale to make a difference. Colleges have piloted numerous “boutique” programs that are demonstrating results locally for small numbers of students. It is far rarer to find systemic changes implemented across a state system of higher education.

## The Important but Difficult Coordinating Function in Higher Education

States play a large role in achieving systemic changes as they variously design, fund, and regulate higher education enterprises including community and technical colleges, state colleges and universities, and mechanisms to coordinate them. The challenge of producing systemic change falls heavily on entities responsible for coordinating postsecondary institutions. In many cases, a state-level body is charged with coordinating multiple institutions or even multiple systems of institutions, each with its own governing body. Leaders of coordinating bodies must find ways to motivate and influence the direction of institutions they do not directly or completely govern and that have strong traditions of autonomy.

Across states there are substantial differences in institutional arrangements among higher education systems. Understanding the possibilities and levers for achieving systemic change from a state's higher education enterprise requires attention to three dimensions, as laid out in Figure 1.

A state higher education coordinating body exists within a specific state political and economic context, operates as allowed by specific institutional designs, and will select specific organizational and leadership strategies. We list these dimensions in order of malleability by those seeking improvements in the performance of higher education. Underlying state-level political and economic factors are not easily changed. Institutional designs are somewhat more changeable, and many states are redesigning their postsecondary systems and rethinking the coordination function. Organizational and leadership strategies are the most easily changed and can be selected to take best advantage of state context and the powers afforded by institutional design.

This case study uses the three-part framework, shown in Figure 1, to explain how the coordination function has been exercised effectively by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Before turning to the factors that explain SBCTC's effectiveness, we describe why SBCTC was chosen as the subject for a case study of effective coordination.

Figure 1  
Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Postsecondary Coordination Effectiveness



## Why Study Washington?

Washington's higher education system evolved with two distinct structures. The six public universities are each independently governed and work together only informally. The 34 community and technical colleges are organized into 30 districts and are collectively governed by a hybrid structure of 30 local boards of trustees and the SBCTC.

SBCTC has an enviable national reputation as a coordinating entity that works effectively. This reputation is justified by three sets of accomplishments that mirror the essential functions of effective coordination and state policy governance, as articulated by national experts.<sup>2</sup>

### **Establishing a cohesive system mission of public value.**

SBCTC has excelled at instilling and maintaining a mission for the system defined clearly around public purposes – around educating Washingtonians for the betterment of the state's economy. From state board members to college presidents and faculty, to local trustees, to legislators, the mission of the system is well understood and commonly articulated to be that of preparing Washingtonians for jobs in the state's economy. Policy accomplishments are noteworthy for having been pursued in response to identified state needs. Colleges work to meet the needs of their local students and communities within the larger context of state needs.

**Facilitating policy changes at scale.** Over the past twenty years or so, the SBCTC has facilitated large-scale change through innovative policies to, among other things, increase the college-going rate, smooth and speed the transition of underprepared adults into credit-bearing programs, systematically measure student progress, reward colleges for increasing student achievement, and

increase baccalaureate production in high-need fields.<sup>3</sup> The SBCTC has succeeded in implementing change across the community and technical college system.

**Balancing and mediating relationships among multiple participants.** SBCTC has skillfully managed external relationships to allow college presidents and trustees to exercise strong leadership of their colleges even as the governor and legislature find the system to be highly responsive to state lawmaker concerns. The legislature has largely been content to express its priorities for the system in broad terms while delegating specific policy-setting and implementation to the college system. SBCTC

has managed and mediated internal relationships such that the colleges view SBCTC as advocates with whom they can collectively work out divisions and present unified messages to state lawmakers.

These three sets of accomplishments could not have been achieved without an effective coordinating

body. Whereas autonomous colleges can pursue their own interests in ways that don't satisfy state purposes, SBCTC has managed to strike an equivalency between the two such that colleges define local goals in ways that collectively demonstrate to state politicians a commitment to achieve state goals. Whereas most states have been stymied by the inability to replicate successes of pilot programs broadly across their institutions, SBCTC has been able to recognize programs with potential for broad-scale impact and help bring them to scale. Whereas it is not uncommon for postsecondary systems to contend with what they believe to be intrusive legislative or gubernatorial oversight, SBCTC has averted intrusion by mediating effectively between lawmakers and the colleges.

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3 See Appendix A for a brief description of notable policy innovations.



# Setting the Stage for the Case Study

## Understanding the Organizational Perspective

Despite the advantages that a coordinating entity can bring, convincing postsecondary institutions to forgo some autonomy for collective benefits can be hard, especially if institutional circumstances are so varied that their interests diverge. In those cases, coordination may be perceived as interference, or worse, as a hostile takeover. In deference to values of local autonomy, most coordinating bodies have been granted only limited powers by their designers. Few have real authority to mandate change and must rely on forms of influence including selective use of limited resources to provide incentives for change. Even where powers to compel action do exist, forcing change on unwilling recipients rarely results in long-lasting improvement.

In view of all the challenges facing coordinating entities, what has made this coordinating organization able to effectively marshal the collective energies and resources of the community and technical college system toward a cohesive mission defined around public purposes? From our case study research, we find the explanations of the State Board's effectiveness in the three sets of factors introduced earlier in Figure 1 and elaborated in Figure 2.

First, SBCTC's successes evolved within a distinct cultural context. While this does not preclude other states drawing important lessons from Washington's policy successes, it does mean that attention to the particulars of a given **political and economic** context will be important in determining how best to proceed.

Second, SBCTC has several **institutional design** characteristics that have proved critical to its ability to provide effective coordination around difficult policy choices. As more and more states are considering changes to their coordination structures, designers would be wise to consider which elements are most likely to foster effective coordination.

Third, a series of exemplary leaders has used effective **organization and leadership strategies** to propel the organization forward. Reflecting the state's political and economic context and exercising the powers granted to SBCTC, its leaders model strategies and behaviors that are widely applicable to leaders of public organizations, providing perhaps the most useful part of this case study.

Like any public entity that operates with a part-time lay board, SBCTC staff play a critical role in the dimensions of leadership we have discussed. We wish to clarify at the outset that when we reference SBCTC, or the State Board, throughout this paper, we are speaking of the board and its staff as a unit, in full knowledge that board members hold the formal powers and ultimately make the decisions. The highly professionalized staff members provide the day-to-day expertise and capacity to help the Board exercise those powers.

Figure 2  
Explanatory Factors in SBCTC Effective Coordination





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## Drawing Lessons from the Case Study

While the critical message of this case analysis is the need for all the pieces to work together – to build effective institutional designs that fit a specific context, and to use organization and leadership strategies effectively – the case suggests attention to specific issues for those in different roles, as suggested in the following list:

- **Governors and their staff** – how to use formal structures and appointing powers to design and make effective use of coordinating entities
- **Legislators and their staff** – how to design and use coordinating entities effectively and define clear roles and responsibilities for lawmakers and college leaders to maximize the effectiveness of a college system
- **Coordinating boards and their staff** – how to maintain a vision around public purposes for all constituent institutions, delegate authority to maximize local flexibility consistent with system vision, bring reforms to scale, orchestrate effective system communication with state lawmakers, and facilitate strategic thinking and effective decision making
- **College presidents** – how to engage in effective self-governing within a multi-institutional system, maximize the advocacy role of local trustees, and achieve a workable balance of roles among presidents, system heads, and politicians
- **College trustees** – how and when a local board can maximize its effectiveness through cooperation with other colleges in the system, in order to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts
- **Intermediaries who advise and support any of the above parties** – how effective coordination can best be designed to match state circumstances, what formal governance design elements are more/less critical in various settings, what leadership qualities and strategies should be encouraged at coordinating boards.

At the end of the document is a self-assessment instrument designed to get users to think about the relative strengths and weaknesses, or the assets and deficits, that are facing a state with regard to postsecondary coordination. It is intended to facilitate honest assessment about a state's political and economic context, the prevailing governance structures, and the capacities within the coordinating organization as a basis to consider what improvements in postsecondary coordination might be attainable.

Applying lessons from one state to others is always tricky because states are unique. Nevertheless, we believe that Washington shares enough in common with other states to make its lessons worth considering. Appendix B compares ten states on aspects of community college governance, funding, and size including eight states of particular interest to The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the funder of this study. Of the ten, only two lack local governing boards for their community colleges and those two states have state-level coordinating boards. Of the eight states that have local community college governing boards, five (including Washington) have appointed local boards and three have elected boards. Most boards are larger than those in Washington and appointing authority is not always only with the governor, as in Washington. Washington is near the middle rank of the ten states on the number of colleges, the size of college enrollment, and the state's population. Washington is not unlike other state systems in its heavy reliance on state funding sources.

We now turn to the three dimensions, identified in Figure 2, that collectively explain the evolution and performance of the SBCTC as an effective coordinating agency. Within each dimension, we describe each relevant factor in turn.

# State Political and Economic Context

SBCTC, like any public organization, operates within a larger political and cultural context. It has a particular mission, purpose, and structure but those elements could be transported to another state with quite different results if that state had materially different political and economic characteristics. Before delving too deeply into the specifics of the State Board, it is useful to discuss the broader context of Washington as we believe it pertains to the story of the Board's effectiveness.

## Populism

All localities have their own tolerance for centralization or de-centralization of political power and decision making. While some states have centralized power at the state level, others, like Washington, defer to locals whenever possible. Both systems can work, but it is difficult to understand the political power dynamics without knowing what the community will accept.

Washington sits squarely in the populist category. Virtually every discussion we had began with a variation on the theme that Washington is a "populist state" that cherishes local control and decentralized governance. "Populism" seems to be code for a deeply-held belief that decision making is most effective if it begins at the local level. To the extent that statewide needs are to be overlaid on locals, extensive consultation with affected local entities is expected. A second meaning we gleaned from the reference to populism is that local entities, collectively, have a responsibility and a motivation to work together for the greater good. Local entities should be consulted not only to articulate individual, possibly competing, local interests to be adjudicated at the state level, but to help forge consensus among individual local interests to produce better outcomes than those otherwise imposed by the state.

Such populism plays out for SBCTC in its reliance on local colleges, through mediating structures, to have a significant role in decisions about systemwide issues. The dominant perspective seems to be that when colleges work together they help not only the state but themselves. The State Board

itself has explicitly balanced its statewide role with a deep commitment to local control. One interviewee went so far as to say, "What makes us strong politically is not the State Board but the effectiveness of the local boards working in concert with the State Board." This theme of continual balance between statewide efforts and deep respect for local autonomy permeates this report.

Achieving strength as a collective will be a strong theme in our later discussion of organization and management strategies, because State Board staff have worked hard

to sustain that collaborative culture. But we have to believe that Washingtonians have a certain predisposition to collaboration that is part of what interviewees meant by the culture of populism.

Populism plays out as well in the legislature's relations with SBCTC as compared to the four-year sector. Members

have refrained from micromanagement of community college decisions, delegating nearly all authority on statewide matters to the State Board. Reflecting the populist preference for decentralized governance, the six universities are not organized as a system but have formed a voluntary association called the Council of Presidents. Under this arrangement, the universities have been less successful than the colleges in presenting unified policy positions to the legislature and are generally considered less effective in gaining legislative support.

A final contextual note about Washington and populism is the relatively smooth relationship between faculty unions and the State Board and colleges. Faculty unions

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bargain at the college level and the state organizations have not been an antagonistic stakeholder group as is the case in some states. Faculty members and unions participate in task forces and other activities but are not a dominant political force in the governing of the colleges. There is no statewide academic senate; faculty unions represent faculty in systemwide issues.

This deeply rooted idea of populism is complementary to the coordinating function undertaken by the State Board. True coordination requires understanding all the moving parts in a process and respecting what each component can add to achieve the desired outcomes. Coordination of efforts does not presume that any one party has all the answers. Populism, with its respect for local control, likely provided fertile ground for a true coordinating body to emerge.

## Part-time Legislature

The structure of a legislative body can have significant impact on the scope of the legislation it produces. The extent to which it engages in policy setting via statute varies greatly and is at least partially related to whether members are full-time or part-time legislators. Full-time legislatures appear to generate considerably more “law” in any given year and tend to reach further into the details than do those that are part-time. Similarly, term-limited legislators appear to take a shorter-term view of policy issues. Some attribute this to the difficulty in “getting up to speed” on complex issues while others observe that term-limited legislators focus on those issues that will play out during their tenure. Regardless of the explanation, term-limited legislatures often find it difficult to take the long view.

Washington’s legislature is part-time without term limits. Legislators are deeply rooted in their communities, living and working there most of the time. Lacking term limits, legislators are more likely to stay in a seat long enough to learn the complexities of government policies and to learn to know, and trust, leaders of the college system. Several members of the Washington legislature previously served as local college trustees and the body includes a former State Board member and a current State Board staff

member. The state legislature has avoided micromanaging the community college system, leaving most substantive policy and financial choices to the State Board.

## Economic Dependency on Two-year Colleges

A state’s education system has obvious linkages to its workforce and economy. Ideally, the K-20 system produces the necessary quantity and quality of workers to meet the state’s needs. Because of the lead times necessary to educate individuals, matching the outcomes of an education system to state workforce needs is a challenging and dynamic process. Historically, and certainly well into the latter decades of the 20th Century, Washington’s economy was resource-driven with mainstays in agriculture, lumber and wood products, shipbuilding, and tourism. In such an economy, jobs were in large part driven by local industries. The economy suffered a near collapse in the late 1980s-early 1990s, brought on by many factors including the national recession and the related downturn in housing construction, increased environmental regulation that curtailed logging, and the lingering fallout of the eruption of Mt. St. Helens.

This economic dislocation proved to be an historic turning point for the college system. It afforded the opportunity for the system, under astute leadership, to position itself as the solution to the economic crisis by being the chief job training entity in the state. After a particularly hard-fought legislative battle in 1993, SBCTC became eligible to receive unemployment insurance trust funds to train displaced workers. Building on that victory, the system established itself as the primary provider of job training geared to the new directions of the state’s economy. This was a turning point not only in the public view of the college system but also in the SBCTC’s state-local balancing act. Job training, always a locally-based mission, now required more state-level policy direction and funding in order to meet emerging state needs. Colleges retained control over the selection and design of “professional technical” job training programs but were held accountable for outcomes to demonstrate to employers that they were worthy recipients of unemployment insurance trust funds.

# State Political and Economic Context

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## Continuity of Political Party of Governor

Washington has had a Democratic governor since 1985. Prior to that, Democrats and Republicans generally saw the control of the office go back and forth. Because the governor appoints state and local board members of the college system, there has been continuity of direction spanning the period of the system's emergence as a national leader in policy innovation. However, we have learned that the most important qualifications for a trustee are his or her devotion to the mission and ability to advocate locally and statewide on behalf of the system. Trustees come from both political parties and may not even be particularly identifiable as partisan. Furthermore, the community college mission is not a

particularly partisan one. The Democratic governors have had different degrees of identity as "education Governor" as well. Nevertheless, the continuity has likely benefited the State Board staff as it has worked to harness the collective energies and resources of the college system to fulfill its mission.

The combination of populism, a part-time legislature without term limits, the severe economic downturns, and the continuity in political party leadership, together provide a political and economic context that facilitates the work of SBCTC. Contexts are not easily changeable. Effective public managers understand that and work with and around the context that exists in their environments. SBCTC has done that effectively for several decades.

# Core Institutional Design Elements

The design of public institutions is crucial for their ultimate success. Good design does not ensure good policy outcomes, but poor design can severely blunt effectiveness. SBCTC has key elements of institutional design that facilitate success – Washington law vests ultimate fiscal and policy control in the State Board and consolidates control over the appointments at the state and local levels in the hands of the Governor. Accompanying that authority is a clear mission that encompasses not only transfer and workforce elements but also the General Educational Development (GED) and Adult Basic Education (ABE). The Board itself does not function like a state agency, but looks and feels more independent. Each of these elements contributes to the ability of the State Board to be successful in its coordination role as detailed below, following a brief overview of the SBCTC structure.

## SBCTC: The Basics

As shown in Figure 3, the State Board consists of nine members appointed by the governor for terms of four years. The Board is served by a staff that has ranged in size from 85-100 over the past dozen years. The Board and its staff serve the 34 community colleges throughout the state, which include five technical colleges. Each district has a five-member local board of trustees as its governing body. Like the State Board members, the trustees are appointed by the governor, with the consent of the senate, and serve terms of five years. The trustees are responsible for hiring college presidents; in the case of multi-college districts, trustees also hire a chancellor to lead the district office.

A distinguishing feature of the organization is that two non-profit associations play critical roles in the execution of SBCTC and college work. One is the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges (WACTC). This non-profit association is the organization of college presidents that develops policy recommendations to present to the State Board. Formed as a vehicle for the colleges to work together, college presidents serve rotating terms as president of WACTC and an extensive network of committees, councils, and commissions (essentially subcommittees) facilitates the work. The trustees also have an independent association, the Trustees Association of Community and Technical Colleges (TACTC). WACTC and TACTC work very closely with the State Board and many of the core system management functions are, in practice, heavily integrated across WACTC, TACTC, and SBCTC, with the State Board staff bridging the three groups, as shown in Figure 4.

## Broad Fiscal Powers

The ultimate authority in any organization is held by those who control the purse strings. Higher education coordinating bodies typically suffer from one or more limitations of fiscal authority. They may merely be "pass throughs" for allocating state funds to colleges, having no role in resource allocation decisions. The funds they pass along may be just one piece of the funding pie with other money generated locally. They may lack sufficient funds to support their own coordinating function. The funding they do receive may come with multiple constraints, limiting flexibility in executing policy decisions. Lacking fiscal authority, many coordinating bodies are quickly relegated to the sidelines. Indeed the recent demise of Washington's higher education coordinating board (HECB) and California's Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) are examples of state coordinating entities without fiscal authority. The California Community College Chancellor's Office typifies the struggles to exercise strong coordination over local colleges when subject to a predetermined formula to allocate resources to colleges and countless state regulations that control the use of agency resources.

The Washington legislature has delegated considerable authority to the SBCTC, appropriating operating and capital funds directly to the State Board with no predetermined rules for distribution to individual colleges. The Board determines how much to hold off the top for its coordinating function and is authorized to determine the basis for college allocations. The Board also has authority to set tuition levels for the college system each year, up to a legislatively-established limit for year-to-year increases.

# Core Institutional Design Elements

Figure 3  
Basic Structure of College System

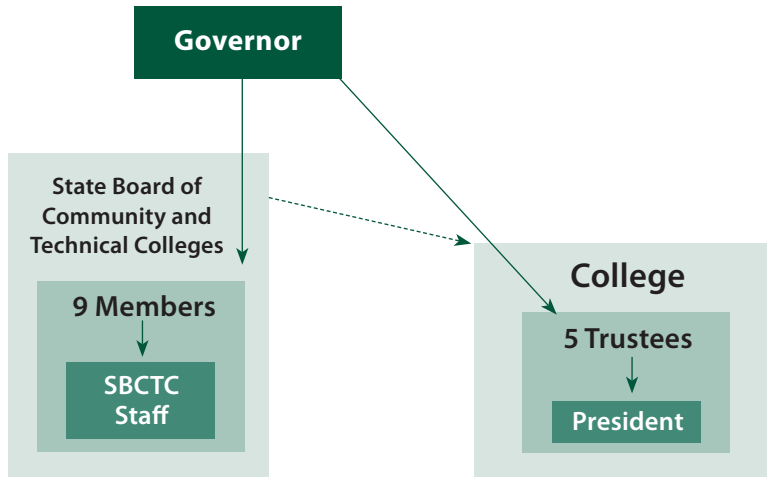
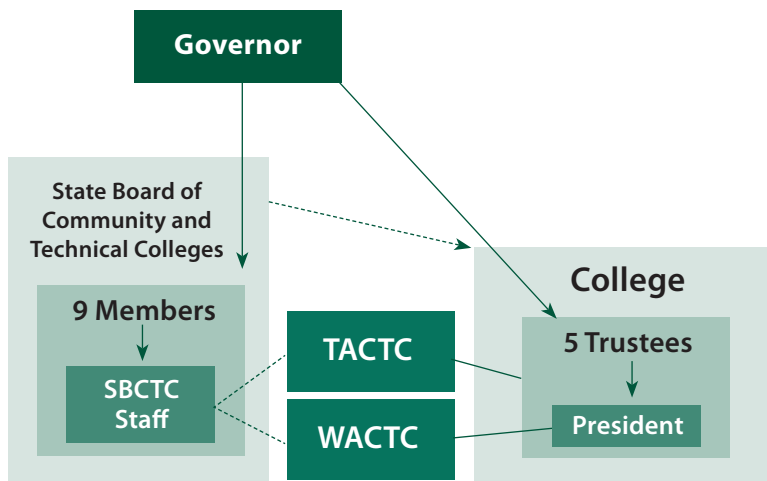


Figure 4  
Integrated Management: SBCTC, WACTC, TACTC





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With no local taxes supporting the system, the Board oversees the vast majority of system resources.

In practice, decisions about funding allocations for both operations and capital projects is shared broadly with WACTC but this is a collaborative strategy that has evolved over time. The ultimate funding authority remains with the State Board and it can choose to assert that authority in the form of funding decisions at any time. The decision to share power reflects a purposeful choice that has proven effective, rather than something embedded in institutional design. However, because it does ultimately control the purse strings, the Board has levers with which to compel cooperative behaviors. As we discuss in the strategies section below, the Board has rarely exercised unilateral fiscal authority.

*Broad policymaking authority, even if part of the core design of a coordinating entity, must be nurtured and protected.*

## Broad Policy-Setting Authority

Authority over policy development is also critical to organizational success. If policy direction comes from above with multiple constraints, the organization becomes little more than a program implementer or a fiscal pass through entity.

The state legislature granted SBCTC broad policy authority along with broad fiscal authority. In addition to the authority to submit a single system budget to the legislature and disburse funds, state law concentrates in the SBCTC authority to ensure that each region offers necessary programs, and to establish qualifications for instructors, financial procedures, and admissions policies. This policy authority has remained in place over the 45 years of operation, with few, if any, instances of the state legislature overriding this delegated authority by establishing detailed laws relative to the governing of the college system. Even as the legislature has weighed in with more policy direction, lawmakers have largely left it to the State Board to define specific elements of policy. For example, in 2011, the legislature

requested that the State Board propose ways to increase efficiency, including the possibility of district and college consolidation. The details of the consolidation were not defined in statute; rather, the legislature outlined its goal of increased efficiency and requested that the Board report back with procedures that would be followed in any forthcoming decisions about consolidation.

As with its fiscal authority, the State Board has shared policy setting authority extensively with WACTC. This is perhaps most notable in the recent policy efforts for which SBCTC is admired. With the exception of the Student Achievement Initiative, these policies, including Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST), and Opportunity Grants, were initiated by the collaborative efforts of WACTC and the State Board staff and taken to the Board for approval. Even the exception proves the rule: the State Board itself pushed the system to develop a form of performance funding, but all of the details were assigned to, and worked out by, the staff and WACTC.

The discussion of balance of power between the legislature and the State Board highlights an important issue. Broad policymaking authority, even if part of the core design of a coordinating entity, must be nurtured and protected. The State Board has earned the right to retain this authority by using it to the satisfaction of both the colleges that it coordinates and the state legislature from whom it receives authority. This balancing act requires near constant attention, which we address in the discussion about specific leadership strategies. The State Board and its staff have been particularly attentive to the importance of both serving multiple constituencies and sharing power. Thus, while institutional design matters greatly, the powers assigned to the State Board for policy and fiscal matters are only a necessary, but surely not a sufficient, component of its ultimate success.

# Core Institutional Design Elements

## Unified Political Appointing Power

Boards and commissions often receive appointments from multiple entities. It is not uncommon to see a statewide body with representatives formally nominated, if not formally approved, by legislative leadership, the governor, and perhaps specific interest groups. While a plausible argument could be made that this increases representation, it also signals appointees that they are there as representatives of a specific perspective, potentially reducing collaboration.

Local governing bodies can be appointed or elected. Elected bodies have the same benefits and constraints as listed above – representatives may arrive believing they have a mandate from a particular constituency. In higher education, locally elected bodies can become embroiled with labor issues, resulting in a board focused more on working conditions for faculty than on learning conditions for students. Beyond labor concerns, elected local boards could promote local needs, as they should, but without much consideration of how the local mission connects to state-level concerns.

Appointing power for Washington’s local trustees as well as for State Board members rests with the Governor. This eliminates local board elections, which can become partisan political battles or an opportunity for unions to assert control over college administrative policies, including the hiring and firing of presidents. While local trustee appointments could become politicized by governors, that does not appear to be the case in Washington. Local trustees are active community members and leaders, appointed less for party affiliation than for commitment to the cause. Compared to other states with elected local trustees, Washington’s trustees bring fewer "agendas" to the table other than to advocate for their local college and the state college system.

At the state level, board member appointments, for whatever reason, have not become the political "plum" appointment reserved for close political allies of the governor. Local board members include a broad range of individuals with extensive experience in state government, business, and higher education. Four of the current nine members have served formerly as a trustee of a Washington community college, indicating that experience and knowledge of the mission of the college system is an important factor in the composition of the State Board.

## SBCTC is Not a “State Agency”

Coordinating bodies created as an arm of the state can quickly become viewed by colleges as a control

agency with interests quite distinct from, and often at odds with, those of the colleges. Frequently viewed as a regulatory body, these state agencies can become something for colleges to resist or work around.

*Local board members include a broad range of individuals with extensive experience in state government, business, and higher education.*

In contrast to this image, the legislature designed SBCTC more as a part of the community college system than as a state agency. This is evident most clearly in the human resources area. State Board staff members enroll in the community college retirement system rather than the state system. The Board has significant discretion over internal hiring. Only about one-third of the State Board staff positions are subject to civil service, with the remainder exempt. Even the civil service positions are structured as internal to the State Board, so that classifications can be developed appropriate to the system’s mission and duties and vacant positions are not subject to transfers in from state agencies with unrelated missions. The scope of authority of the exempt positions is even greater. The state has no position control over the State Board, leaving the Board free to define the number and duties of positions it needs

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and can afford from the share of the budget allocation that it reserves for the State Board staff. This flexibility across the human resources function allows for ease of movement between college and State Board staff positions, something the State Board takes advantage of frequently. The Board always looks first to the colleges to fill staff positions in academic and student affairs arenas, which sustains the character of the State Board as part of the college system.

## Encompassing Mission to Serve Adults

In order for coordinating bodies to use their fiscal and policy authority effectively, they must have appropriate jurisdiction. The complexities of education and workforce training, the multiple dimensions of an open enrollment mission, and the historical connection of most community colleges to K-12, have compounded the jurisdiction problem for many community college coordinating entities. When accountability for actions and outcomes is not accompanied by authority over the appropriate policy or program areas, frustration ensues.

The State Board has a broad mission encompassing GED, ABE, developmental education, workforce development, and transfer. Bundling all of these elements, which are sometimes split with K-12 and other entities, into a single functional area allows for clear boundaries for community colleges and relatively little dispute over turf. Uncontested jurisdiction over these areas has allowed the State Board to move forward in devising its policy and programmatic priorities broadly around the needs of Washingtonians.

When the state experienced severe economic dislocation in the late 1980s to early 1990s, it was not a stretch for the community college system to envision itself as the chief provider of job training. The incorporation of the five remaining public vocational institutes into the system in 1991 was perhaps the obvious move, with the mission of workforce training well established for SBCTC. When demographic and economic forces combined to produce a severely under-educated adult working-

age population, the system saw a clear role and moved aggressively and innovatively to redesign its approach to educating adults. The State Board staff commissioned research to show that the future educational attainment of the state depended even more on educating adults in the workforce than on shoring up the high school-to-college pipeline. This drove creation of the nationally renowned I-BEST program and other efforts to build career pathways from GED and ABE into college credential programs. The achievement point system devised for the Student Achievement Initiative illustrates how the SBCTC built on its encompassing mission to underscore both the responsibility and the opportunity for colleges to help even the most under-prepared students move through a series of "momentum points" into and through credential programs.

These institutional design elements – broad fiscal and policy authority, cohesive governing boards, identity as part of the college system, and a clear encompassing mission – have provided Washington with an effective institutional structure for its community college coordinating entity. This allowed a series of excellent leaders to use time-tested strategies to facilitate difficult but necessary policy choices that have consistently moved Washington's community colleges into the forefront of American postsecondary education.

# Organizational and Management Strategies

Even the most well-designed institution can fail if its leaders are not strategic and skillful at managing the organization's people and processes. In coordinating entities governed by lay boards with large staffs, it is incumbent upon leaders to facilitate the work of their board, their staff, and the colleges. To understand what we observed in Washington, we found guidance from a conceptual framework that explains how public leaders make their organizations most valuable.<sup>4</sup> There are three dimensions to which effective leaders of public entities must attend. First, they must constantly seek to make the mission of the organization valuable to the public it serves. Second, they must work to achieve support for the organization and its mission from the external stakeholders, particularly those with the authority to grant viability and legitimacy to the organization. Third, having found a mission and stakeholder support for it, they must ensure that the organization has the people, resources, and relationships to fulfill the mission. With the help of this framework we can identify the strategies that SBCTC leadership has used in creating a college system valued for its service to Washingtonians.

## Relentless Focus on a Mission of Public Value

The idea of a mission-driven organization is much celebrated by observers of organizations today. Simply put, if all members of an organization are clearly focused on the ultimate purpose of the organization, then individuals and units will be better able to work collaboratively towards desired outcomes. A mission focus helps an organization avoid diffusing its energies across too many priorities. It helps remove barriers to change, allowing organizations to be more adaptable and innovative about how they do business, as new ways to achieve goals are identified. Mission-driven leaders understand that the ultimate goal is to achieve a purpose and that the processes and policies it uses are simply means to achieve desired ends. SBCTC epitomizes a mission-driven organization.

We were struck, in our many interviews, by the consistent focus on student achievement and meeting the workforce needs of Washington State. Trustees, college presidents, state board members, and staff all articulated a common view of exactly what their core work was to accomplish. Policies and processes were described but consistently prefaced with a thoughtful description of the desired outcome. Nearly everyone with whom we spoke understood that student success and preparing the state's workforce were driving policy and that policies and processes are simply a means to an end. Two examples demonstrate the power that a real mission-focused organization can harness.

For those outside the academy, common course numbering for the same course taught by different colleges in a single college system may seem like an obvious step to address problems students face in moving among institutions and problems colleges face in documenting student learning outcomes. For those on the inside, however, it can seem to be a bureaucratic imposition of rigidity that dishonors faculty control of the curriculum. In the absence of a clear rationale, common course numbering is frequently resisted by faculty. When the idea was initially proposed, many in Washington's colleges reacted with reluctance. However, enough skeptical faculty were ultimately convinced by continual discussions of how the change would serve students better. Much of this dialogue occurred among the colleges, perhaps with the knowledge that the Board ultimately could compel compliance. Without an overriding focus on mission – on what is best for students – this effort may well have failed.

A second example is found in the nationally known Student Achievement Initiative. This performance incentive initiative came from the State Board as a means to help implement the 2006 *System Direction* goal to improve academic achievement for all students. Performance funding is highly controversial within the academy, so with the added provocation of a Board initiative proposed to colleges used to initiating, not reacting to, policy, colleges were naturally on guard. Following considerable collaborative effort (described

4 Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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later), the innovative policy was adopted. It strikes us as significant that unlike other states' unnamed efforts to introduce performance funding, in Washington the effort carried a name that underscored the mission of the system. Attending to the complexities of performance funding firmly within the context of improving student achievement and education levels of the state's workforce allowed the system to proceed, in spite of some misgivings among presidents and others. As one interviewee said, "I'm not completely happy with it yet but I know that it's the right thing to do for students." As of this writing, the system is reviewing the initiative for possible modification – something that was envisioned in the initial design principles and that helped gain early support from the presidents.

## Continual Cultivation of Support from Key External Constituencies

Gaining and keeping the support of key constituencies is critical to the success of any public organization. In higher education there is a wide range of constituencies that can threaten stability and legitimacy if not on board. Legislatures and governors are key external stakeholders whose support is needed to acquire resources and the delegated authority to use them. But legislators and the governor will look to other constituencies for validation of an organization's worth. Important external constituencies in postsecondary education include statewide business and labor groups, other postsecondary institutions, and potential external funders.

SBCTC has been successful in this endeavor on multiple counts. Its reputation with lawmakers is that of a competent and professional system that is striving to meet state needs, reports honestly about its challenges as well as its accomplishments, and brings issues into the state policy arena only after considerable thought and internal work. Lawmakers find their oversight role made easier by the system's penchant for reaching consensus on issues before bringing them into the state political arena. It does so by means of an elaborate collaborative decision-making structure that we describe in a subsequent section.

The business community has been vital in supporting SBCTC's legislative efforts. Some trace that support back to the partnership that evolved following the authorization of unemployment insurance trust funds to be used by SBCTC for workforce training. The colleges recognized they needed the support of employers to continue that funding stream. Because the colleges were able to produce and document results, employers were willing to support continued efforts. The legacy of that early partnership is strong today as the business community views SBCTC as first and foremost about producing educated and skilled workers for the Washington economy and as SBCTC continues its outcomes orientation.

SBCTC has also maintained cooperative relationships with the four-year postsecondary sector through the Council of Presidents, the organization that represents the six public universities. Lacking the local connections to all legislative districts that the two-year sector enjoys, the universities, through their Council, have found it advantageous to work together with the colleges. SBCTC has complied, working closely with the Council on priorities like the applied baccalaureate and the improvement of transfer pathways to address the documented shortage of upper division capacity in the state. Until the recent dissolution of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), SBCTC leaders cultivated a three-way partnership on state-level issues, including the heads of the Council of Presidents and the coordinating board.

SBCTC has enjoyed strong support from another set of external constituents – the philanthropic and research communities. There is hardly a national community college reform effort that doesn't include SBCTC, although board staff have learned to limit their participation to initiatives that align with their own strategic directions. Foundations have been key players in community college reform over at least the past decade and their financial support has been significant in these times of severely constrained public resources. SBCTC's commitment to innovation (one of the three themes of its 2006 *System Direction* document), its commitment to using data in decision making, and its competence and mission focus, have attracted investment of external resources and external partners to support continued research and innovation.



# Organizational and Management Strategies

The State Board was an early adopter of two tools for cultivating stakeholder support: data and strategic communications. It used these tools to help define and communicate its mission, share its accomplishments, and cultivate support from a variety of internal and external audiences. Through its participation in the Bridges to Opportunity initiative of the Ford Foundation, for example, the Board partnered with external researchers and a communications firm, and staff believe these efforts have contributed to their effectiveness in building support from key constituencies.

Having described the organization's success in maintaining a valuable mission and gaining stakeholder support for the mission, we turn now to the organization's success at ensuring it has the internal capacity, i.e., the people, relationships, and resources to fulfill its mission.

## Policy Strategists More Than Program Implementers

Different disciplines provide different training for encountering the world, and those original tools retain a powerful pull as one moves through one's career. In the world of public sector organizations, training at the program level is often confused with experience with policy. An excellent engineer does not automatically make an excellent public works director. Organizations certainly need staff who understand how to implement programs – to acquire necessary resources, deliver the program as designed, and assess the results. But effective organizations also value individuals who are policy strategists. Policy strategists monitor the environment in order to better anticipate and understand problems, use data habitually to understand trends inside and outside their organization, and consider the multiple tools available to achieve policy outcomes. They often propose criteria and principles as first steps in seeking solutions, a tool for working through contentious decisions. Building

the intellectual capacity to think long-term about policy issues can be difficult in a resource-constrained environment replete with short-term problems. However, successful organizations understand the central role of systematically thinking through policy choices.

In our case study research we were struck by the keen understanding of policy, as distinct from programs, by SBCTC and college leaders and of the value placed on

policy professionals. More than a few current and retired leaders with whom we met had academic backgrounds in public policy, public administration, and/or educational leadership. We noticed that "policy associate" is a common staff job title in core units of SBCTC and learned that these positions

are more highly paid than "program administrators." Policy associates are expected to think broadly about how the State Board should position itself to achieve a strategic direction. We learned of a new WACTC task force created to envision future possibilities for the system, unrelated to specific current programs or policies. We learned that State Board leadership staff set aside time in most staff meetings just to think ahead. This may seem like an unaffordable luxury in a time beset by daily challenges, but in our view, it is an important factor in the State Board's effectiveness.

State Board meetings allow significant time for learning about and discussing emerging issues. Conversely, the Board tries to minimize the time it devotes to adopting regulations and chooses to place as many rules as possible into an informal policy manual as opposed to the official regulatory code, freeing up its time to devote to broader policy issues.

The Student Achievement Initiative is an example of how the talent to think ahead positioned the college system favorably. Performance funding has a history of pitting postsecondary institutions against lawmakers,

*Different disciplines provide different training for encountering the world, and those original tools retain a powerful pull as one moves through one's career.*



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as increased attention to public sector accountability in the 1980s and 1990s led lawmakers to sometimes impose funding rules on colleges and universities that seemed invalid to educators. As performance funding was getting renewed attention in the 21st Century, the State Board got “just enough ahead” of the game (to quote a State Board staffer) to influence the national conversation, allowing the system to design an approach that would be accepted by the college presidents. Not surprisingly, the initiative has become widely influential across the country due to its use of intermediate measures of student progression.

The Student Achievement Initiative also illustrates the SBCTC’s strategic approach to using its fiscal authority to advance policy. We have previously described how the State Board has chosen to delegate or share its fiscal authority with WACTC, taking care not to make fiscal decisions by fiat. But an important part of the Board’s policy orientation involves bringing resources to the table in the form of incentives to influence the work and priorities of the colleges. The Student Achievement Initiative illustrates this selective, and strategic, use of fiscal authority in a way that is both powerful yet respectful of the shared decision making that has served the system well.

## Extensive Collaboration and Shared Decision Making

Mission-focused organizations require a shared understanding of the desired outcomes if everyone is to move in the same direction. Doing this effectively in a shared power arena is most effective if there is a culture of collaboration and shared decision making. In its simplest form, an organization’s culture is a shared set of beliefs and norms that get translated into behaviors. Those new to an organization learn quickly about its culture, understanding “how things are done around here.” Culture can be transmitted directly and self-consciously or indirectly. Decision making in higher education is shared by tradition and often by policy, but whether it is truly collaborative is a matter of

culture. Effective shared decision making in complex organizations can slow things down but the payoffs are significant when decisions are implemented, as participants understand the rationale for heading in a particular direction. Participating in shaping a decision also results in stronger commitment to the decision.

SBCTC has a highly developed collaborative organizational culture that it has worked very deliberately to develop and sustain. We found several aspects of this collaborative culture to be worthy of explication: (1) the shared understanding of what collaboration means; (2) the degree of formalization to which shared decision making has been taken; and (3) the methods used to sustain it.

### ***(1) The Meaning of Collaboration***

We consistently heard the core value expressed by college presidents and trustees that they are better off together than separate, even if collaboration does not always meet an individual college’s needs. This understanding of collaboration as interdependence results in a set of expectations about behaviors. For example, presidents are expected to participate in decision making and publicly support a collective decision, once final, even if they did not agree with the decision. Those who do not collaborate do not survive well in the system, generally leaving of their own volition. This has been true for staff members of the State Board as well as presidents who have come in and served relatively short tenures.

A sophisticated dimension of the collaborative culture is tolerance for the occasional slip-up. Interviewees, nearly universally, viewed this as part of the normal give and take and not a signal of any weakness of the culture. The consistent focus on mission, combined with a sophisticated understanding of what it means to work with other people, produces a more nuanced understanding of the “problem of the moment” as distinct from, and not worth derailing, the long-term goals and working relationships.

## Organizational and Management Strategies

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### ***(2) Formalized structure for shared decision making***

A critical aspect of the shared decision making in the college system is the extent to which it has been formalized through the relationship between the State Board and WACTC, the presidents' organization. Among the stated purposes of WACTC are to “increase the effectiveness of community and technical college education in the state of Washington through appropriate joint action and coordination of member institutions” and “to review with and recommend policies and procedures to the Executive Director of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.”<sup>5</sup>

Under statute, SBCTC has considerable authority to make fiscal and policy decisions on behalf of the system and could impose those decisions on the colleges. In practice, SBCTC has chosen to share several core decision making tasks with WACTC. Most notably, WACTC annually develops and recommends to the State Board the specific allocation of operating and capital budgets for colleges.

As one example of the extensive consultation role played by WACTC, the legislature recently asked SBCTC to report on how the community colleges might become more efficient. Behind the request is a message that the legislature might want to consider some consolidation of colleges and districts. The State Board turned to WACTC for counsel on this potentially contentious effort. The presidents, with staff assistance from SBCTC, have taken the first steps in determining how efficiency might be improved and their work continues as of this writing.

The WACTC structure demonstrates multiple dimensions of effective shared communication and decision making. Rather than an association designed by presidents to lobby the State Board, WACTC has become a critical part of the decision structure through the participation of college presidents, vice presidents, and directors on

committees, commissions, and councils, respectively. SBCTC provides staff support to each of the commissions and councils, a time-intensive task but one that ensures continuity of information. Depending on the nature of the topics under discussion, State Board members themselves may serve as liaisons to the commissions. In this way, the colleges become fully engaged in decision making on consequential activities such that when it comes time to lobby the legislature, college representatives understand the rationale for a given outcome. Struck by the number of meetings that the WACTC structure alone requires, we inquired often about their value and were assured that the meetings are effective and well attended because members understand that important decisions are made at the meetings.

Managing with a large dose of shared culture and collaboration, rather than relying on formulas or rules, requires constant attention and buy-in from all parties. An example of this self-governance is found in the system's approach to the capital outlay budget. Working through WACTC, the presidents compile a rank-ordered list of capital budget projects to be submitted for funding consideration each biennium. As the legislature considers the budget, presidents might be tempted to use local legislators or other powerful connections to help move a project up on the list. In fact, legislators may think they are doing their jobs by helping increase the priority of a local capital project. To protect system cohesion, the presidents have created an “end run” policy, spelling out the expectation that the list will be honored once approved by WACTC, and the financial penalty to be imposed on a college that knowingly works to advance its project at the expense of others. The policy has created an interesting incentive that benefits the system: presidents and trustees lobby their legislators to provide funding to go as far down the list as needed to reach their own projects, clearly benefiting those above them on the list.

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5 Constitution, Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges, Approved November 4, 2011. Retrieved June 26, 2012: [http://sbctc.edu/college/documents/WACTC\\_Constitution\\_Approved\\_11\\_4\\_2011.pdf](http://sbctc.edu/college/documents/WACTC_Constitution_Approved_11_4_2011.pdf).

Two stories illustrate the depth of commitment to the collective list and the expectation that lawmakers will adhere to it. A college president reported calling his local legislator in a panic because the legislator had independently sought to move a project up on the list. The president implored the legislator to leave it where it was so that the college did not get penalized or appear to be breaking the self-imposed rules. In a recent budget cycle, the governor altered the priorities, arguing that athletic facilities should not be funded in this fiscal climate, even though those projects were high enough on the list to make the funding cut. The college presidents and the SBCTC together lobbied hard to leave the list as it was and were ultimately successful. They argued that violating the priority order would threaten much more than the projects in question – it would threaten the entire cooperative basis the system has developed over the years.

Adoption of the end-run policy signals increasing sophistication in the presidents' collaborative efforts, moving beyond simple cooperation into the realm of self government. Self-governing groups cannot function on good will and good intentions alone. For collaboration to be successful, parties must be willing to engage in the decision-making processes and some sort of consequence must be imposed on those who do not collaborate. The end-run policy provides for this. To our knowledge only one college has been penalized under the system. The mere threat of penalty seems to be enough to reveal potential offenders and largely maintain compliance.

Washington's capital project list is perhaps the best, but not the only, example of the willingness to work together even when it may cost a particular campus. The presidents jointly develop allocation methods for the operating budget and, with a larger task force,

they developed the point system by which colleges are rewarded for increasing student achievement. They chose colleges to pilot the applied baccalaureate degree. While not free of conflict, this collaborative approach to governing has reduced the likelihood of having the decisions become heavily politicized.

The trustees organization, TACTC, is part of the collaborative decision structure as well. It contributes

members to system task forces and funds a State Board staff member to serve as a liaison between TACTC and the State Board. TACTC formed a legislative action committee consisting of one trustee from each college that meets weekly during the legislative session to help engage all trustees in the system's legislative agenda.

*State Board staff have institutionalized a variety of means to sustain the collaborative culture, none more vital than the hiring process.*

Over time, the coordinating structure designed by statute has been augmented by a sophisticated shared decision-making relationship with WACTC and TACTC. Thus, presidents, trustees and the State Board have myriad opportunities to shape and understand decisions and move the system toward a shared goal.

### **(3) Sustaining Collaborative Culture**

State Board staff have institutionalized a variety of means to sustain the collaborative culture, none more vital than the hiring process. SBCTC capitalizes on the flexibility designed into human resource processes by being very purposeful in its hiring. Throughout the college system there is recognition that ideas from outside the system and the state are valuable but that excessive recruitment from outside can destabilize the culture that has proven so effective. Board staff positions in academic and student affairs units are usually recruited from the colleges (where the culture is similar) while staff for government relations and finance posts who can represent SBCTC to lawmakers are sought from "the hill." Vacancy announcements include a standard statement

# Organizational and Management Strategies

describing the nature of the SBCTC work environment, stressing the collaborative culture. Board staff proactively seek out applicants they know from across the system. Applicants often self-select because the culture and reputation of SBCTC are well known.

New staff members are integrated into the collaborative culture through extensive briefings and a staff manual that contains a comprehensive review of the mission, function, and expectations of staff members. Orienting new staff members is common across organizations. More unusual, but every bit as valuable, is the SBCTC effort to orient new local trustees, who, as governor appointees, might expect to act independently. Here again, the state board and its staff have been proactive about "on-boarding." Through new member training, trustees are instructed about the way the system works, including the expectation that trustees will "localize" the system message to their local policymakers rather than advocate on behalf of their own colleges as self-interested actors. Similarly, new presidents receive extensive training and are inculcated into the collaborative culture of the Washington SBCTC.

Another means to maintain the culture is the regularly scheduled and well-run meetings that provide an opportunity for newer members to learn, and for more seasoned individuals to demonstrate, the culture of collaboration. Not only new presidents, but all presidents regularly attend briefings and legislative strategy sessions and are expected to be "on message" when called to testify to the state legislature. The cohesion of that message ultimately rests in the hands of the colleges because there is a college in every legislative district. If college presidents and trustees are expected to deliver messages that benefit the entire group, the strong collective culture must prevail.

## Strategic Use of Data

In this era of accountability, "data-driven decision making" has become the mantra of organizations seeking to be more accountable to the public and to improve their own effectiveness. Yet it is far easier to talk the talk than to walk the walk. For starters, public organizations often fear that data that expose performance shortfalls will

be used against them by lawmakers. Moreover, using data for internal improvement requires moving beyond a compliance mode of reporting easily available data. Data that can help those inside the organization understand strengths and weaknesses must be generated and examined across the organization. Many

organizations lack the data systems and the internal capacity to use data in this manner.

The State Board is highly regarded for its extensive use of data for both internal and external purposes and has been strategic in its use of data since before data-driven decision making became fashionable. We learned from previous SBCTC staffers that the data capacity was developed in the 1980s in order to better answer tough questions from the legislature about the system's performance in relation to state needs. By the late 1980s the system possessed a strong research capacity which it has used not only to satisfy its legislative overseers but also to communicate within the system, building a common understanding of mission, needs, and priorities. SBCTC made an early decision to automate compliance reporting in order to devote less time to that and more of its research capacity to long-term and strategic planning. Using this capacity, they have looked for systemic weaknesses and advocated for policies and resources to strengthen performance. In so doing they avoided the poor publicity and criticism that can accompany poor performance and instead gained support for their mission along with a reputation in the state policy community for transparency and honesty with respect to data.

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Several interviewees trace the Board's sophistication in the use of data to highly contested legislation in 1993 that redirected a portion of unemployment taxes paid by businesses into a workforce training fund. When colleges became eligible for funds, they retooled programs to meet employer needs. The business community, led by Boeing, initially opposed the redirection of the unemployment funds. The community colleges eked out the necessary support for new training money but the upshot was pressure on SBCTC to demonstrate the outcomes of their workforce training programs. This spurred a sharpened focus on measuring and reporting student outcomes to demonstrate that investment in its college system was paying off.

The State Board's data capacity and its partnerships with external researchers have been essential factors in its policy development. The Board's collaboration with researchers at the Community College Research Center at Columbia University generated the "tipping point" and "momentum points" findings that were crucial in the development of I-BEST and the Student

Achievement Initiative. The Board's use of data from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) on the extent of the under-educated adult population was instrumental in cementing its high priority on creating pathways to bring adults from noncredit to credit educational pathways. Data on geographic areas underserved by universities influenced the choice of community colleges to offer applied baccalaureates. The widespread reliance on data to examine outcomes and set policy directions works hand-in-hand with the SBCTC's collaborative approach to policymaking. The use of data to drive decision making can neutralize personal or political agendas that might distract decision makers from the broader mission. In Washington, colleges have come to understand and respect the critical role the State Board staff play in gathering and interpreting data, as no college would have the capacity to do what the Board can do for them. Because data are shared widely across the extensive network of decision-making structures, data capacity is a source of legitimacy for the State Board but not a source of power that is abused.

# Coordination - The Ultimate Balancing Act

Coordinating a set of semiautonomous entities is a distinctly different task than managing or directing. A coordinating role implies that each party has some independent standing that must be respected but that there are benefits to working together. The balancing act that the State Board has performed includes determining when and how to further statewide coordination and when to let local priorities and directions rule. A leader sitting at the state level will rarely have complete information about the impacts of the decision at the local level. Similarly, a college may need to be persuaded of the statewide benefits of an effort that carries a price. Finding the proper balance between local and state decision making is ultimately the job of the State Board.

## New Times, New Challenges

The equilibrium point between local and state decision making has varied over time in Washington. Astute observers note that a shift in the balance of power has occurred in recent years. When longtime executive director Earl Hale retired in 2006, the Board made it clear that it wanted a stronger role. Current (but soon to retire) executive director Charlie Earl, who succeeded Hale, understood this directive and has acted accordingly. The State Board has also worked to give the trustees organization, TACTC, a bigger leadership role within the system. Additionally, the legislature has begun to engage more actively in setting the policy agenda for the college system.

Presidents, especially those with some tenure in the system, had become accustomed to setting the policy agenda. Historically, policy innovations began at the college level or at WACTC. But the State Board proposed, in fact mandated, the Student Achievement Initiative and the legislature mandated the efficiency study. In both cases, the details of the policies and their implementation were left to the familiar internal collaborative processes. The State Board was also the force behind the recent *Mission Study*, to identify more specifically the means to implement system priorities, and the Technology Task Force, to develop a plan to update the college system's approach to technology.

These Board and legislative actions signal a certain impatience with business as usual. As lawmakers attempt to balance shrinking state budgets among competing state services, they are calling for greater efficiency and accountability across state government. A handful of legislators are pushing for more and faster changes

from the college system. The State Board itself is restless and striving to stay ahead of the legislature to stave off unwanted interference.

The shift to more directives coming from the State Board has left some college

presidents feeling that they are no longer equal partners in running the system. Some claim that presidents have become just one of many stakeholders seeking the ear of State Board members and worry that the consultative processes that have served the system well are eroding. Others, while understandably nervous about the future of their institutions, note that it was probably time for the colleges to be forced to take a hard look at current practices and to accelerate the pace of their decisions. They acknowledge that business as usual might not be sustainable in the current fiscal environment.

A new equilibrium has yet to be achieved. This unsettled balance will likely strain the collaborative culture, testing its mettle as nothing before has. If severe losses are to be distributed, will colleges be able to withstand the pressure to preserve themselves at the expense of others? The economic pressures from state budget downturns are compounded as the public and the

*Presidents, especially those with some tenure in the system, had become accustomed to setting the policy agenda.*



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federal government raise questions about college costs and accountability. Will Washington's colleges be able to make changes quickly enough, with their consultation processes, to satisfy pressure from the legislature? Will they once again find frameworks that allow for extensive self-governance, or will they work to advance formulas that will benefit some at the expense of others, reflecting comparative political power? Only time will tell.

Many of the most senior staff we interviewed at the State Board and at colleges articulated a sophisticated understanding of the way organizations work; they understood the perspectives of other players even when

those perspectives differed from their own. Much of this understanding seems to center in genuine clarity about the various roles that must be played to keep the system working – the State Board, the college trustees and presidents, the legislature, and key constituencies all have a role to play, as was described eloquently by Earl Hale nearly 20 years ago.<sup>6</sup> That understanding of organizations, and a keen awareness of how the policy process can be used to improve outcomes, should continue to serve the system well. A system that could easily fracture along any number of lines has remained largely unified, continually producing innovative policies to serve their students and the citizens of Washington.

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6 Hale, E. (1994). Management perspectives at the state level. In A.M. Cohen & F.B. Brawer (Eds.), *Managing community colleges: A handbook for effective practice* (pp. 141-165). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

# SELF ASSESSMENT

## Increasing the Effectiveness of Postsecondary Coordination

A Companion to  
“On Balance: Lessons in Effective Coordination from the  
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges –  
An Organizational Perspective”

### A Framework for Understanding Effectiveness

Public organizations charged with coordinating higher education institutions face a complex set of tasks. Whether coordinating institutions within one sector or across sectors, such organizations play vital roles in promoting a state’s capacity for policy leadership to meet the growing need for an educated citizenry. National experts have emphasized that effective policy capacity requires coordinating entities that can articulate mission and goals, devise strategies for meeting them, and use resources, including relationships with state leaders, to influence policy. Our case study subject, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, was selected because of its track record of focusing a diverse constituency on a valuable public mission and using its resources strategically to facilitate large-scale policy changes aimed at making progress toward the mission. Its effectiveness rests in large part on its continual attention to relationships in order to mediate and balance the needs of various state and local parties.

For states interested in improving existing coordinating organizations or designing new ones, we suggest that an assessment of the current context can illuminate possibilities for improvement. Multiple factors interact to create forward momentum and can be leveraged in myriad ways. Thus, the self assessment questions are designed so states can more clearly understand the factors at play in their own situations and more strategically evaluate short-term and long-term opportunities.

The most critical component in evaluation is honesty. No coordination effort will work if the context is not well understood. Accepting the existing starting point will lead to much better outcomes than attempting to coordinate within a “wished for” context. Over time, of course, better options may become available, but for today you must work with what you have.

Recognizing the different circumstances across states, the self assessment questions do not presume a “right” answer, although clearly there will be circumstances where one condition would be preferable to another. Nothing is beyond improvement; some states will just have a considerably longer road to travel.

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The self-assessment questions fall into three categories: the state political and economic context, the design of the coordinating body itself, and the organization and leadership strategies used by the coordinating body. These factors are generalized from the Washington experience. They do not reflect an exhaustive review of the research or experiences of other states.

- 1. State political and economic context.** The political culture of a state shapes expectations about the role of government, the degree of centralization of power, the level of legislative oversight, the function of interest groups – expectations that affect how postsecondary education operates. These cultural aspects of state contexts change slowly if at all. Economic aspects of a state’s context may change somewhat more readily as industries shrink and grow and state fiscal circumstances improve or worsen. Differing economic situations will place different demands on higher education institutions. Those seeking to improve postsecondary coordination must understand the constraints and opportunities presented by their own prevailing state contexts.
- 2. Institutional design.** Coordinating bodies have specific formal governance structures and rules, usually created by statute. These can be changed, given sufficient time and political will, and many states are making or considering such changes. States should be aware of (a) how well institutional design, and the formal powers it bestows, matches public expectations about basic distributions of powers and functions and (b) the implications of institutional design for the kinds of funding, people and relationships needed to make it work.
- 3. Organization and leadership strategies.** The leaders of coordinating entities must devise strategies for success while understanding the constraints imposed by the existing political and economic culture and the institution’s design. The best design can be wasted, or undermined, by poor leadership and poor choice of strategies. Conversely, gifted leadership can overcome serious deficits in formal power. Unless the formal design is so flawed that even gifted leaders can’t make it work, attending to organizational leadership offers more and shorter-term opportunities to increase effectiveness of the coordinating function.

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The following questions are intended to help individuals in other states, or those working with other states, understand what opportunities may exist to improve the coordination function. We organize the questions by the three-part framework of state context, institutional design, and organizational leadership to make it clear at what level these potential change agents might need to focus their attention.

### How to Interpret the Self-assessment Results

The instrument is not designed to produce a quantifiable score but rather, to get users to think about the relative strengths and weaknesses, or the assets and deficits, that are facing a state with regard to postsecondary coordination. It is akin to an environmental scan in traditional strategic planning. Rather than identifying a “wished for” context, one must begin with what exists. It will be important for users of the self-assessment to think in terms of assets and deficits both within and across the three “buckets” of state context, institutional design, and organizational leadership. Changes in some areas may be more attainable than in others and improvements in one area might be able to compensate for deficits in others. The findings are highly state-specific and there are no right answers. But it is important for those invested in the coordination function for a specific state to take a holistic view across the three categories. For example, institutional design features that work well in a state with a highly collaborative political culture, like Washington, may not work well in states with hyper-partisan political cultures or with faculty unions that are more active in state-level policy than is the case in Washington.

Users of the self-assessment should look for opportunities to address identified deficits. It may be possible, for example, to influence state contextual factors by mobilizing populations that have not been sufficiently engaged, perhaps by demonstrating links between postsecondary issues and other high-priority issues or by communicating problems in more meaningful ways. Another possibility is to consider some temporary, ad hoc structures to work around identified deficits in the short term while longer-term solutions are developed. Effective coordination is difficult – hence the genesis of this case study subject. The self-assessment is intended to illuminate possibilities for improvement – even as it will likely point to some daunting challenges. We caution users that the strategies that emerge from this assessment may well require a long view of the change process and associated patience. Those working in government often experience that policy change occurs at a snail’s pace. The same may be said of organizational change. Legitimate, meaning widely accepted, change takes a long time to take effect. Keeping an eye on the long-term objectives will be important, as the pace of change can be slow and distractions numerous.

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## Key Questions for a State's Self-assessment

### State Context

This set of questions begins by inquiring broadly about the economy of the state, the political culture, and the degree of oversight that characterizes the power relationships between state government and postsecondary institutions, including the coordinating entity. Much of this will be simply background information as these features are not likely to change, but they are a critical part of the background understanding. Responses to these questions should clarify the extent and level of state involvement in postsecondary education and whether authority is concentrated with the governor, the legislature, or passed on to a coordinating entity (CE).

1. What are the basic drivers of the state's economy? Have those been relatively stable over time?
2. Generally speaking, are policy and fiscal matters traditionally handled locally or at the state level; i.e., is the accepted locus of decision making largely centralized or decentralized?
3. Are state laws generally adopted in a broad frame with details left to the agency or local level to work out or are they highly detailed and specific?
4. Is the political atmosphere highly polarized around partisan lines? If so, has higher education become part of the politically partisan debate?
5. Does the governor traditionally play a strong institutional role in influencing the postsecondary system?
6. Is the postsecondary culture one of competition or collaboration among institutions?
7. To what extent do local colleges compete against each other in the legislative arena, either via the college representatives or via local legislators?
8. What level of oversight do lawmakers typically provide to the existing CE?
9. To what extent is the CE expected to centralize priorities, operating procedures, programs, and policies across the constituent institutions? Are expectations geared towards an articulated state vision or local differentiation?

# Self Assessment

## Increasing the Effectiveness of Postsecondary Coordination

### Institutional Design

Institutional design, or formal governance structure, likely reflects state culture to a great extent. Therefore, it is important to consider answers to the previous section when assessing institutional design. For those states that have an existing coordinating entity, reviewing the design elements will be helpful for understanding the authority that the board has been granted. For others it may suggest alternatives for their state. Major topics for consideration here include the statutory basis of governing bodies, the scope of authority over fiscal and policy decisions, and relationships to other education entities. These questions should help clarify whether the CE has sufficient authority to match its charge and the expectations for its performance. Different combinations of these design components offer different opportunities for effective coordination but some options may be constrained by state context.

10. What is the scope of the stated mission and purpose of the CE? Is it comprehensive or more narrowly prescribed? What does the scope of the mission imply for relationships with other educational institutions?
11. Does the statutory basis of the governing board facilitate implementation of a coherent statewide agenda?
12. Is the CE role primarily designed as a regulator or a facilitator of constituent institutions? Do the assigned tasks reflect the role?
13. How is funding distributed from the state to colleges? Does the CE have a meaningful role in determining distributions or is it a pre-determined formula approach?
14. How much control does the CE have over the use of system resources? Can it meaningfully influence the use of institutional resources in pursuit of systemwide priorities? To what extent is resource use pre-determined by legislative or gubernatorial mandates?
15. What is the mix of state and local revenues for the system? How does this mix affect the ability of the CE to build a cohesive agenda?
16. To what extent is the CE dependent on other educational agencies to fully achieve its mission?
17. How much control does the coordinating entity have over hiring its own staff?
18. What is the role of local trustees? Are they elected? Appointed?



## Organizational Leadership

Once the context and design elements are understood, a CE can begin to better understand the type of coordination role it might most effectively play. For some states coordination is effectively achieved by helping myriad local entities stay relatively united at the policy level while respecting the local differences. Other states may find that extensive control is vested (historically and/or in statute) in the legislature and thus legislative relations might take center stage in the management of relationships and setting of organizational strategies. The critical component for this section is seeking alignment of the CE with the authority, expectations, and resources at its disposal. For any state, the principal leadership challenge is to set the organization on a path to fulfill its mission. Important elements in this section include mission clarity, cultivation of support from key constituencies, and development of a staff with the requisite skills to meet the mission.

19. How actively does the CE seek to identify a mission of value, focus on it, and communicate clearly about the mission?
20. Does the CE board appropriately apportion its time between strategy/policy oversight versus rulemaking given its mission?
21. Does the CE staff appropriately apportion its time between strategy/policy oversight versus rulemaking given its mission?
22. Does CE leadership exercise its leadership so as to earn or keep the appropriate level of confidence from lawmakers?
23. Are external constituencies identified? Are working relationships cultivated?
24. How well does the assignment of roles and responsibilities to CE staff align with the expectations of state lawmakers for the degree of centralization of the system?
25. How well does the assignment of roles and responsibilities to CE staff align with what college leaders expect and will be comfortable with?
26. Do senior CE staff have appropriate professional backgrounds to work effectively with colleges and lawmakers, as appropriate to their assignments and expectations of the CE?
  - a. Do governmental relations staff understand the culture of the capital?
  - b. Do budget staff understand the legislative appropriations process and campus fiscal management?
  - c. Do educational program and policy staff understand the campus culture?
27. Does the CE and do the colleges have a well-coordinated approach to dealing with outside constituencies, such as business and labor?
28. Does the director have the interpersonal skills to understand and balance state and local perspectives, including working effectively with internal and external constituencies?
29. Is there good information flow within and across the CE and the colleges?
30. Are local trustees utilized to help express system priorities to the public and to lawmakers?
31. Does the CE have sufficient data capacity to understand systemwide performance in relation to state and local needs?

# Self Assessment

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### Putting the Pieces Together

Once you have considered the above questions you will begin assessing what the combination of factors means for your state. As a starting point in putting the pieces together, we suggest considering these two questions:

1. Does the CE's institutional design, (i.e., the formal structure and powers) match the expectation by state lawmakers for the mission and functioning of the CE?
2. Does the capacity of the CE organization, (i.e., leadership, staffing, relationships) allow the CE to discharge its formal mission and duties?

The range of possible combinations of answers to these questions is boundless and there is no one best set of answers. We believe that thoughtful consideration of these questions can help those engaged in working to improve postsecondary coordination better understand the relevant context, the value of core design, and ways to align organizational operations with expectations.

# Appendix A

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## SBCTC Notable Policy Innovations – Descriptions and References

### Running Start

Running Start is a program dating to the 1990s that allows 11th and 12th grade students to enroll in courses at any of Washington's community and technical colleges, giving them an early start on their postsecondary educations. Students in Running Start receive both high school and college credit for their courses.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Running Start Annual Progress Report*. Olympia, WA: Author.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Running Start Program*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/s\\_runningstart.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/s_runningstart.aspx).

### Worker Retraining

In 1993, the Washington legislature enacted the Workforce Employment and Training Act, a program that serves dislocated and unemployed workers by offering occupational training to prepare them for future careers. Specifically, the funds from the Workforce Employment and Training Act help workers pay for training programs and assist community and technical colleges in improving programs to update equipment and revise curriculum.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Worker Retraining*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/\\_e-wkforceworkerretraining.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/_e-wkforceworkerretraining.aspx).

### Centers of Excellence

Centers of Excellence are statewide institutions that provide leadership in a targeted industry. The Centers serve as statewide liaisons to business, industry, labor and Washington's education systems, working to ensure information and resources are shared among the different stakeholders. Specific to education, the centers look to coordinate programs and the training they provide, to ensure programs are aligned with businesses' needs, and to assist schools in offering relevant

training. Currently there are ten Centers of Excellence, focusing on: Agriculture, Allied Health, Aerospace and Advanced Materials Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Construction, Education, Homeland Security, Information and Computing Technology, International Trade, Transportation, and Logistics, and Marine Manufacturing and Technology.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Centers of Excellence*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.edu/college/\\_e-wkforcecentersofexcellence.aspx](http://www.sbctc.edu/college/_e-wkforcecentersofexcellence.aspx).

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2009, February 27). Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.edu/college/workforce/revise\\_final\\_coe\\_vision\\_mission\\_ends.pdf](http://www.sbctc.edu/college/workforce/revise_final_coe_vision_mission_ends.pdf).

### Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

I-BEST's model integrates adult basic skills education and postsecondary occupational training. Each class has two teachers, a basic skills instructor and a college-level career-technical faculty, who jointly design and teach college-level occupational courses to students in need of adult basic education. I-BEST programs are required to include college-level occupational credits that are part of a career pathway and must be in a field deemed high-demand locally.

Jenkins, D., Zeidenberg, M., & Kienzl, G. (2009). *Educational Outcomes of I-BEST Washington State Community and Technical College System's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program: Findings from a Multivariate Analysis*. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Prince, D. & Jenkins, D. (2005). *Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice from a Statewide Longitudinal Tracking Study*. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

# Appendix A

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e\\_integratedbasiceducationandskillstraining.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_integratedbasiceducationandskillstraining.aspx).

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2008). *Increasing Student Achievement for Basic Skills Students*. Olympia, WA: Author.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2005). *I-BEST: A Program Integrating Adult Basic Education and Workforce Training*. Olympia, WA: Author.

## Applied Baccalaureates

In 2005, the legislature gave the SBCTC authority to select community and technical colleges for pilot programs offering an applied baccalaureate degree. In 2010, legislation gave the SBCTC the authority to remove the pilot status from applied baccalaureate programs. There are currently eight applied bachelor programs at Washington's community and technical colleges. Applied baccalaureates are designed to fill specific skill gaps and serve students seeking degrees in technical areas with limited opportunities available at four-year colleges.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2011, July). *Applied Baccalaureate Degree Program Approval Process*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/education/applied\\_baccalaureate\\_degree\\_program\\_approval\\_process\\_july2011\\_000.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/education/applied_baccalaureate_degree_program_approval_process_july2011_000.pdf).

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Applied Baccalaureate Degrees at Community and Technical Colleges*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e\\_appliedbaccalaureates.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_appliedbaccalaureates.aspx).

## Opportunity Grants

The SBCTC developed Opportunity Grants in 2006 through pilot programs run by ten community and technical colleges. The Opportunity Grants help low-income adult students train for careers designated as high-wage, high-demand (starting at \$13 per hour). Grants cover multiple years of tuition and may include tutoring, career advising, and childcare.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Opportunity Grants*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.edu/college/s\\_opportunitygrants.aspx](http://www.sbctc.edu/college/s_opportunitygrants.aspx).

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2011). *Opportunity Grant Program*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.edu/college/studentsvcs/2011\\_opp\\_grant\\_report-final.pdf](http://www.sbctc.edu/college/studentsvcs/2011_opp_grant_report-final.pdf).

## Student Achievement Initiative

The Student Achievement Initiative is a system of performance funding for the community and technical colleges. Formerly, funding came entirely based on enrollment targets, but now outcomes are evaluated as a basis for allocating a small portion of funding. There are four categories of achievement measures:

1. Building towards college-level skills (basic skills gains, passing pre-college writing or math)
2. First year retention (earning 15 and 30 college-level credits)
3. Completing college-level math (passing math courses required for either technical or academic associate degrees)
4. Completions (degrees, certificates, apprenticeship training)

Colleges do not compete against each other for performance funding, but rather against their previous scores on these measures.

Jenkins, D., Ellwein, T., & Boswell, K. (2009). *Formative Evaluation of the Student Achievement Initiative "Learning Year"*. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Shulock, N. & Jenkins, D. (2011). *Performance Incentives to Improve Community College Completion: Learning from Washington State's Student Achievement Initiative*. Sacramento, CA: Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy.

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Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (2012). *Student Achievement Initiative*. Retrieved from [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e\\_studentachievement.aspx](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_studentachievement.aspx).

### **Open Course Library**

The Open Course Library is a collection of free, digitized, and shareable course materials published by the SBCTC for use by instructors in designing common introductory classes. The Library includes course materials like syllabi, course activities, readings and assessments designed by college faculty or experts. Course materials are intended to be adoptable by and adaptable to faculty anywhere as a starting point for designing a course.

Caswell, T. (2011, May 27). *The Open Course Library of the Washington State Colleges*. Retrieved from <https://edutechdebate.org/digital-learning-resources/the-open-course-library-of-the-washington-state-colleges/>.

Open Course Library. (n.d.). *FAQ*. Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/a/sbctc.edu/opencourselibrary/home/faq>.

Suehle, R. (2011, October 31). *The Open Course Library Launches Today with a Vision for Better Open Courseware*. Retrieved from <http://opensource.com/education/11/10/open-course-library-launches-today-vision-better-open-courseware>.

# Appendix B

## Community College Size, Governance, and Funding in Ten States

State	State and System Boards: Governing or Coordinating <sup>1</sup>	Legislature: Full or Part Time <sup>2</sup>	Is There a Local Board (appointed or elected)	Funding Sources <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ # of Colleges</li> <li>■ # of Students</li> <li>■ % public undergrad enrollment in 2-year sector</li> </ul>	Size of State (2010 population) <sup>4</sup>
California	System-Level Coordinating Board (17 members)	Full	Yes (6-9 members, elected)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 60.0%</li> <li>• Federal government 11.3%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 8.4%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 10.5%</li> <li>• Other 9.8%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 112 colleges</li> <li>• 2.9 million students</li> <li>• 75%</li> </ul>	37,253,956
Florida	State-Level Coordinating Board for Universities and Community Colleges (7 members); State-Level Governing Board for Community Colleges	Full	Yes (5-9 members, appointed by governor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 44.4%</li> <li>• Federal government 16.8%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 24.1%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 6.8%</li> <li>• Other 7.9%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 colleges</li> <li>• 800,000 students</li> <li>• 38%</li> </ul>	25,145,561
Kentucky	Regulatory State-Level Coordinating Board; Governing Board for Community and Technical Colleges (14 members)	Hybrid	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 41.5%</li> <li>• Federal government 23.1%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 16.6%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 14.0%</li> <li>• Other 4.8%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19 community colleges; 6 technical colleges</li> <li>• 93,000 students</li> <li>• 48%</li> </ul>	4,339,367
New York	State-Level Coordinating Board and 2 System-Level Governing and Coordinating Boards: State University of New York (SUNY, 18 members) with 64 campuses and City University of New York (CUNY, 19 members) with 19 campuses	Full	Yes (5 members appointed by local legislative body or board, four appointed by governor, one student elected by students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 43.4%</li> <li>• Federal government 13.0%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 29.4%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 9.0%</li> <li>• Other 5.2%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37 colleges; 8 technical colleges</li> <li>• 339,000 students (248,000 SUNY in 2011, 91,000 CUNY in 2010)</li> <li>• 48%</li> </ul>	19,378,102
North Carolina	System-Level Governing Board (21 members)	Hybrid	Yes (13-14 members, appointed by multiple actors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 61.6%</li> <li>• Federal government 14.0%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 12.3%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 3.7%</li> <li>• Other 8.5%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 58 colleges;</li> <li>• 810,000 students</li> <li>• 56%</li> </ul>	8,049,313



State	State and System Boards: Governing or Coordinating <sup>1</sup>	Legislature: Full or Part Time <sup>2</sup>	Is There a Local Board (appointed or elected)	Funding Sources <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ # of Colleges</li> <li>■ # of Students</li> <li>■ % public undergrad enrollment in 2-year sector</li> </ul>	Size of State (2010 population) <sup>4</sup>
Ohio	Advisory Coordinating Board overseeing Universities and Community and Technical Colleges (9 members)	Full	Yes (9 members, appointed by governor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 38.2%</li> <li>• Federal government 14.3%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 31.6%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 5.1%</li> <li>• Other 10.7%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 community colleges; 8 technical colleges</li> <li>• 175,000 students</li> <li>• 43%</li> </ul>	11,353,140
Oregon	System-Level Regulatory Coordinating Board for all Community Colleges (7 members)	Hybrid	Yes (7 members, elected)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 46.9%</li> <li>• Federal government 15.3%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 20.5%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 6.0%</li> <li>• Other 11.4%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 colleges</li> <li>• 385,000 students</li> <li>• 56%</li> </ul>	3,421,399
Tennessee	Advisory Coordinating Board for all Public Higher Education (15 members); Governing Board for Community Colleges, Technology Centers and Single-Campus Universities (19 members)	Hybrid	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 41.3%</li> <li>• Federal government 17.6%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 30.5%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 6.6%</li> <li>• Other 4.0%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 community colleges, 26 technology centers</li> <li>• 245,000 students</li> <li>• 42%</li> </ul>	5,689,283
Texas	State-Level Coordinating Board (18 members)	Hybrid	Yes (7-9 members, elected)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 52.3%</li> <li>• Federal government 16.8%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 19.5%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 3.1%</li> <li>• Other 8.2%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 community college districts, many with multiple campuses</li> <li>• 569,000 students</li> <li>• 57%</li> </ul>	20,851,820
Washington	Coordinating Board for Community & Technical Colleges (9 members)	Hybrid	Yes (5 members, appointed by governor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local government 41.4%</li> <li>• Federal government 9.2%</li> <li>• Net student tuition 20.0%</li> <li>• State and local grants and contracts 18.3%</li> <li>• Other 11.2%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29 community colleges; 5 technical colleges</li> <li>• 485,000 students</li> <li>• 58%</li> </ul>	5,894,121

1 Coordination typically signifies an agency or body that is responsible for planning and efficient allocation of resources among multiple community colleges. Governance typically signifies an agency or body that is responsible for policy making that guides the management and operation of one or more community colleges. Information on makeup of state boards came in part from two reports by the Education Commission of the States: <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=224> and <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=223>

2 All cells from <http://www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/legislatures/full-and-part-time-legislatures.aspx>. The National Conference of State Legislatures defines states that require legislators to work 80 percent or more of a full-time job as full-time. Hybrid legislatures require two-thirds of a full time job, and part-time legislatures require only half.

3 Choitz, V. (2010). *Getting What We Pay For: State Community College Funding Strategies that Benefit Low-Income, Lower-Skilled Students*. Washington, DC: Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success.

4 All cells from 2010 census: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>



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