AGENDA ITEM

B-2. Discussion of Strategic Plan Working Documents: Benchmark II................. Kate Henz/Tom Shanahan

Situation:	Benchmark II of the strategic planning process requires each Committee to identify the major issues facing higher education in this strategic priority area (Access), as well as explore solutions peers are implementing to address these issues.
Background:	Through the strategic planning process, which is currently underway, the Board of Governors seeks to develop a set of goals to drive the work of General Administration and constituent institutions for years ahead. The Board of Governors aims to approve a small set of system-wide goals this fall, which will form the basis for the University of North Carolina's strategic plan.
Assessment:	The attached working document for Benchmark II requires additional Committee discussion. After completing this portion of the work plan, the Committee should have a common understanding of the major issues facing higher education in this strategic priority area, as well as some approaches peers are implementing to address these issues.
Action:	This item is for discussion only.

Benchmark II: Evaluate National, State, and University Landscape

Due Date: September Board Meeting

Instructions: The committee should use Benchmark II to assess what is happening nationally and statewide in this strategic priority area. This benchmark will identify the major issues facing higher education in this strategic priority area, as well as explore solutions peers are implementing to address these issues. To complete Benchmark II, the committee should respond to the questions outlined below.

Questions:

What do research and practice show as the key issues higher education is facing across the country/state in this strategic priority area?

Improving access to higher education in North Carolina requires the UNC system to identify and work to dismantle the numerous barriers that divert otherwise qualified, motivated students off the path to a college degree (and sometimes prevent them from starting out at all). As more fully explained below, the key access issues that American institutions of higher education, including the UNC system, must confront can be grouped into four areas: (1) academic preparation; (2) information about and knowledge of higher education options; (3) financial assistance and logistical support; (4) and alignment between educational sectors. These categories are not mutually exclusive and often overlap in ways that affect not only whether a student attends college, but also the timing of enrollment, choice of institution, method of finance, and the pace of progress towards a degree. [1]

Academic Preparation: Students are not adequately academically prepared for college-level requirements.

- Students do not have access to, or are not successful in, rigorous college-preparatory high school coursework.
- Students do not receive thorough, personalized, and supportive college advising in high school.
- Students who come to college unprepared spend valuable time and financial resources in remediation.

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[1] Page, L. C., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2016). Improving college access in the United States: Barriers and policy responses. *Economics of Education Review*, *51*, 4-22.

- Nontraditional students lack access to appropriate institutional services such as individual advising, credit transfer, and credit for prior learning, that help them successfully transition to college.

Information and Knowledge of Higher Education Options: Students and their families lack the information and knowledge required to understand college-related requirements and processes, make appropriate college-related choices, and navigate the complicated pathways into, across, and through higher education institutions.

- Students do not understand their college options, lack information on available careers/majors/salaries and admission requirements tied to specific degree programs, and consequently face barriers to matching with an appropriately selective institution.
- Students lack crucial support from peers, parents, and teachers to encourage them to pursue college and often do not experience a strong college-going culture.
- Students lack knowledge about financial aid, how to apply for aid, and the importance of seeking financial aid early in the admissions process.
- Courses are not available at times and locations when students need them and are not accessible in appropriate delivery formats (e.g., online).
- Students, especially older and returning students, do not understand that there are multiple on-ramps into postsecondary education and therefore lack critical knowledge that would inform their ability to make appropriate choices for themselves and their families.

Financial Assistance and Logistical Support: Students lack, or perceive they lack, the necessary financial resources to pay for college.

- The annual cost of attending college is often beyond the financial means of an individual student and his or her family.
- The stagnation of family income and the loss of purchasing power of the Pell grant, coupled with reductions in state investment in higher education and need-based grant programs increase the financial burden on students who wish to pursue higher education.
- Moreover, students who need financial assistance to help pay for college often do not know what college actually costs, what aid is available, or how and when to access it.
- Students lack the logistical support and are unable to complete the necessary steps to successfully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is also the application for other institution and state aid programs (e.g., UNC Need Based Grant Program).

Alignment between Educational Sectors: There is a lack of alignment among the various groups and institutions in the education sphere (including for example, the K-12 system, the Community College system, the educational non-profits, and other outreach and college access programs), who are often rowing in different (and sometimes competing) directions.

- There is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for the "transition" space between secondary and higher education. Neither the K-12 system nor the postsecondary institutions have staff or resources dedicated to the issues that arise in that space.
- There is often a disconnect between what the K-12 system requires for high school graduation and the admissions requirements imposed by the postsecondary system.
- Collaboration between sectors is limited and neither have the data systems or capacity to analyze and interpret data that could inform changes.

What are peer systems or states doing to address these issues? Examples may include institutional initiatives that may be scalable to the system level.

Colorado

http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/General/StrategicPlanning/201314_HED_Strategic_Plan.pdf

Enhance access to, and through, postsecondary education to ensure that the system reflects the changing demographics of the state while reducing attainment gaps among students from underserved communities.

The CCHE determined that appropriate system-wide goals are to increase the diversity of students on our campuses to better reflect Colorado's current populations and to measure institutional performance in the closing of known gaps in achievement, in particular those related to college participation; performance in remedial and "gateway" courses in English and mathematics; improving credit hour accumulation; and degree/certificate completion. Success in meeting the state's primary goal of increasing the college attainment rate to 66 percent of all citizens ages 25-34 hinges on improving underserved students' access to, progress in, and graduation from colleges and universities in the state.

Target:
Eliminate disparities in postsecondary access, progress, and completion between resident underserved students and resident non-underserved students.

Indicators of Progress:
- Increasing the number and proportion of newly enrolled students from traditionally underserved populations
- Reducing disparities in initial gateway pathway course completion in English and math between underserved and non-underserved students
- Reducing disparities in persistence rates and credit hour attainment between underserved students and non-underserved students
- Reducing disparities in successful transfer and degree completion between underserved and non-underserved students
- Increasing retention and graduation rates for underserved students
- Increasing the share of degrees in STEM fields among students from underserved populations

Georgia

http://www.usg.edu/strategicplan/

Strategic Imperative 1: Commitment to Academic Excellence and Degree Completion

The future of our state depends on Georgians obtaining meaningful college credentials at a significantly higher rate than today. This commitment to degree completion will target the emerging workforce represented by our youth as well as the existing adult workforce, many of whom have some college but no degree.

- Develop Partnerships for College Readiness. The USG will develop more intentional partnerships with K-12 education and the Technical College system and better utilize programs and assessments to ensure academic readiness for all students. We will define the success of our partnerships by what benefits our students and the State of Georgia.
- Reaffirm Commitment to Collegiate Access and Affordability. The USG will maintain its longstanding commitment to collegiate access, affordability, and value. Overall costs to students and families must be mitigated by affordable degree options and through continuance of a cost effective, access tier of colleges. Our access tier will accomplish this goal through a rigorous, focused commitment to educating students while minimizing some of the amenities that increasingly define, but also increase the cost of, a college education. Finally, private sector and alumni support is an absolute requirement to support our continued efforts to increase need--based grants and aid.
- Develop New, Flexible, and Affordable Degree Options. The USG is committed to the development of new and flexible general education and degree program pathways that promote affordable and high-quality course and degree completion options to Georgians.
- Ensure Student Support for At-Risk Populations. The USG will continue the work to ensure student support for at-risk student populations, whether economically challenged or underprepared academically.
- Commit to High-Quality Programs, Teaching, and Learning. The USG is committed to maintaining and improving the quality and diversity of academic programs, teaching, and learning opportunities.

Pennsylvania (PASSHE)

http://www.passhe.edu/inside/bog/Documents/Strategic%20Plan%202020%20Rising%20to%20the%20Challenge_dh.pdf

Enable more students to obtain credentials that prepare them for life, career, and the responsibilities of citizenship:

To increase the success of all students, PASSHE must focus on reducing regional, income, and ethnicity gaps in access while increasing retention and completion. PASSHE is participating in a number of national initiatives to increase the success of underrepresented and low-income students. As part of the performance funding model, targets have been established to reduce gaps in access and degree attainment for both of these groups of students. Many programs and courses

are offered online or at off-campus locations, providing increased opportunities for students—especially the adult learner. To address the particular needs of returning students and veterans, PASSHE is providing access to programs and courses through online opportunities, and recognizing the value of prior learning experiences. PASSHE universities continue to work with community colleges to implement Act 114 and Act 50 to enable students to transition seamlessly from any of the 14 Pennsylvania community colleges to any PASSHE university.

Strategies:

- Adopt standards for awarding credit obtained through such activities as Advanced Placement, CLEP, prior learning experiences, military experience, and dual enrollment to reduce the time to degree and overall cost of educational attainment.
- Develop a mechanism for seamless student mobility within the System and across Pennsylvania's higher education sectors with minimal loss of credit.
- Encourage efficient student academic progress to increase awards and minimize cost to students.
- Attract, retain, and graduate students beyond the traditional 18- to 22-year-old, on-campus, residential population.
- Leverage PASSHE's intellectual resources in teacher education to enhance partnerships with the Commonwealth's school districts and Department of Education to better prepare more of Pennsylvania's children for success in higher education and life.
- Provide appropriate developmental education opportunities for students—traditional and nontraditional—to promote the success of all students admitted.
- Increase the opportunities for students to take courses and programs through online educational experiences by establishing a clearinghouse for all online courses offered across the System.

Expected Outcomes by 2020:

1. Increase the number of awards (degrees and certificates) annually conferred to at least 31,500.
2. Increase the success of low-income and underrepresented minority students by reducing the gap in graduation rates between these and other students by half.
3. Increase access to higher education of low-income and underrepresented minority students by reducing the difference in the entering class for these groups compared to those of all students graduating from Pennsylvania high schools by half.
4. Increase the number of working adult and transfer students enrolled in the System; specifically, increase the number of undergraduate students over the age of 25 to at least 11,000 and the number of Pennsylvania community college transfer students to at least 4,000.
5. Increase the number of courses and programs available to students through distance education; specifically, increase the number of students in online and blended courses to 53,000.

Texas

Overarching Goal: By 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree.

Strategy: Respond to the needs of the changing population of Texas so students are supported into and through higher education.
For example:
- Aggressively promote college attainment to students and parents prior to high school.
- Develop and implement education and curriculum delivery systems (e.g., competency-based programs) to make higher education available to a broader and changing population.
- Provide high-quality education programs for educationally underserved adults. Develop practices to encourage stop-outs with more than 50 semester credit hours to return and complete a degree or certificate.
- Collaborate with the TWC to identify critical fields and to update them periodically.

Second Goal: By 2030, at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's, or master's from an institution of higher education in Texas.

Strategies to Achieve this Goal:
Texas institutions of higher education need to support students earlier in their educational careers to help them persist in their higher education. This may include:
- Expanding co-requisite course opportunities for developmental education students.
- Implementing competency-based programs that allow an adult student to demonstrate essential skills or knowledge either by exam or course completion, and then move through blocks of classes based on what the student knows, for a fixed semester cost, regardless of the number of courses the student completes successfully in one semester.
- Using assessments, such as the Texas Success Initiative Assessment, which enables institutions to accurately determine students' strengths and weaknesses and gives advisers the ability to provide better counseling to students based on this information.
- Implementing electronic degree plans that allow students to input their majors into a computer and receive a list of the required courses needed to complete a specific degree in four years, which may help students avoid taking classes unnecessarily and could shorten the time to a degree.

Strategy: Support the completion pipeline by providing access to multiple postsecondary options.
For example:
- Scale up and share practices that guide students to higher education.
- Collaborate with K-12 in improving college and career readiness.
- Increase the participation of economically disadvantaged high school students in dual credit and other college-level courses.

- Build credentials at each level with the aim of reducing coursework duplication and time to subsequent degrees.

Strategy: Improve academic preparation and academic support for students to enter and complete higher education.
For example:
- Scale up and share practices that support students in their academic preparation for postsecondary education.
- Streamline credential pathways through the P-16 continuum to ensure that secondary education graduation plans, including endorsement coursework, prepare high school graduates for completing a postsecondary credential.
- Scale up and share practices that support underprepared students to increase persistence and completion and to reduce their time to degree.

Strategy: Structure programs and support services to be responsive to the changing needs of the student population to help students persist through key transitions in higher education.
For example:
- Use innovative approaches for content delivery (e.g., block scheduling) and assessment to improve completion and reduce student cost.
- Employ High-Impact Practices (HIPs). HIPs are evidence-based teaching and learning practices shown to improve learning and persistence for college students from many backgrounds.
- Increase use of predictive analytics to identify and assist students at risk of not completing.

Virginia
http://www.schev.edu/index/statewide-strategic-plan/goals

Virginia faces a future in which higher education will play an increasingly important role. Virginians will need deeper and broader knowledge and skills to be engaged, productive participants in our evolving Commonwealth and its economy. At the same time, the demographics of the emerging generation are changing: An increasing share of our youth will come from populations which historically have been underrepresented in both higher education and the highly educated sectors of our workforce. These changes transpire at a time when the price of attending Virginia colleges and universities has increased at unsustainable rates.
- Expand outreach to PK-12 and traditionally underserved communities
- Improve the college readiness of all students
- Cultivate affordable postsecondary education pathways for traditional, non-traditional, and returning students
- Align state appropriations, financial aid and tuition and fees such that students have broader access to postsecondary education opportunities regardless of their ability to pay