

LWVCO Higher Education Consensus Position

05/20/07

POSITION IN BRIEF:

Higher education is a primary educational, research, cultural, and economic force in Colorado. The State of Colorado has a responsibility to support its public institutions of higher education and to assist the people of Colorado in attaining a postsecondary education.

State activities should be carried out with appropriate input from all concerned parties, including the general public.

Governance:

- The League believes the state should emphasize coordination rather than control over higher education.
- The League believes institutional latitude and flexibility should be encouraged but with state oversight.
- The Department of Higher Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education should be led and staffed by professionals with relevant skills and /or experience and be free from political influence.

Financing:

- The League supports a sustainable funding mechanism for public higher education that will provide quality postsecondary programs across the state.
- The League supports sustainable funding for financial aid programs in order to provide access to higher education for all qualified Colorado students.

Access to Higher Education and Persistence by Students:

- The League believes that all qualified students should have the opportunity to attend postsecondary education and that successful participation should be facilitated by a variety of resources.
- Preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education should be viewed as a continuum leading to life-long learning.

POSITION:

Higher education is a primary educational, research, cultural, and economic force in Colorado. The State of Colorado has a responsibility to support its public institutions of higher education and to assist the people of Colorado in attaining a postsecondary education. Postsecondary education includes vocational, technical, community college, four-year, and post-graduate institutions.

State activities should be carried out with appropriate input from all concerned parties, including the general public.

Governance

The League believes the state should emphasize coordination rather than control over higher education. In addition, the state should act in an advisory capacity and provide oversight in some areas.

- Possible areas for coordination include:
 - Promotion of quality education

- Avoidance of unnecessary duplication
- Promotion of efficiency and good management
- Maintenance of a comprehensive and cohesive state system of postsecondary education
- Possible areas for oversight include:
 - Cooperative ventures
 - General standards and requirements
 - Graduation criteria

The League believes institutional latitude and flexibility should be encouraged but with state oversight. Most decisions are more appropriately made at the institutional level. Objectives should be to:

- Adopt policies at the state level that recognize institutional differences
- Encourage decision-making that accommodates the unique role, mission, and characteristics of each institution
- Allow institutions to utilize their expertise to make decisions in areas such as mission, objectives, tuition, degree programs, and student recruitment

The Department of Higher Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education should be led and staffed by professionals with relevant skills and/or experience and be free from political influence.

Financing

The League supports a sustainable funding mechanism for public higher education that will provide quality postsecondary programs across the state. Objectives should be to:

- Maintain and attract quality teaching staff to attract and support quality students as well as research grants
- Eliminate barriers to higher education funding: constitutional, statutory and other
- Assure funding of capital construction and controlled maintenance
- Explore alternative funding for institutions

The League supports sustainable funding for financial aid programs in order to provide access to higher education for all qualified Colorado students. Objectives should be to:

- Increase state funded need-based financial aid to enable all qualified students to attain a postsecondary education
- Increase state funded merit-based scholarships to reward and attract high quality Colorado students
- Provide favorable interest rates on student loans
- Explore alternative funding for student financial aid

Access to Higher Education and Persistence by Students

The League believes that all qualified students should have the opportunity to attend postsecondary education and that successful participation should be facilitated by a variety of resources. Preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education should be viewed as a continuum leading to life-long learning.

Access and persistence begin with preparation during preschool through grade12 (P-12). Objectives should include:

- Implement effective programs that prepare students for increasingly difficult academic work
- Maintain rigorous high school graduation standards and expectations
- Develop programs, including mentoring, that facilitate positive engagement in learning, use a variety of community resources to support students socially and emotionally, and improve academic performance
- Assure that information programs are provided, during middle school and high school, for students and parents regarding academic and financial issues related to attending higher education institutions, as well as information about the variety of options that are available

Access and persistence should be promoted by higher education institutions. Objectives should include:

- Provide information about each institution to high schools throughout the state
- Facilitate transition from high school to college, as well as the process for moving from a community college to a four-year institution or for returning to higher education
- Develop programs, including mentoring, that use a variety of resources to support students socially and emotionally and improve academic performance
- Assure ease of transferring credits between institutions of higher education, including the transition from a community college to a four-year institution

Programs promoting access and persistence used in higher education institutions, as well as in P-12, should be evaluated to assure they are effective and equitable.

Opportunities for vocational and technical education should be increased at the secondary level and at the community college level.