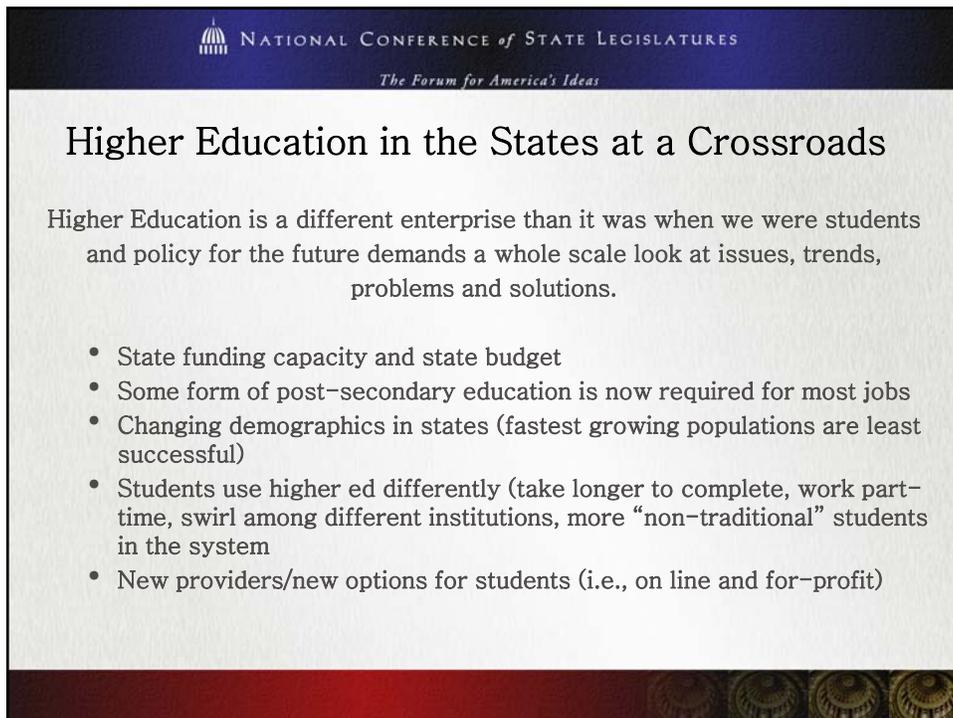




Legislatures and Higher Education
Productivity

 NATIONAL CONFERENCE of STATE LEGISLATURES
The Forum for America's Ideas

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Higher Education in the States at a Crossroads

Higher Education is a different enterprise than it was when we were students and policy for the future demands a whole scale look at issues, trends, problems and solutions.

- State funding capacity and state budget
- Some form of post-secondary education is now required for most jobs
- Changing demographics in states (fastest growing populations are least successful)
- Students use higher ed differently (take longer to complete, work part-time, swirl among different institutions, more “non-traditional” students in the system)
- New providers/new options for students (i.e., on line and for-profit)



Public Opinion and Political Will for Reform

Higher Education is rising as a priority on state legislative agendas

- Growing national and state awareness of problems
- Growing unrest among constituents about access, affordability and quality
- Continued budget and fiscal difficulties in the states

NCSL's Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education recommendations

- Elevate higher education on legislative agendas (economic development, competitiveness, equity issues)
- Higher education is an investment in the future economic strength of the state
- Be more clear about state higher education goals
- Focus on a state public agenda rather than individual institutions
- Be more strategic about budgeting and finance
- Demand data, information and accountability



The Productivity Agenda

Productivity means eliminating inefficiencies in the system and improving college completion:

- More students get through the system successfully (with a degree or certificate)
- Completion gaps narrow for minority, low income, and adult students
- Students get through on time, with a high quality education, with less debt, with a certificate or degree that will get them a job and that has value to the state

There are many promising strategies to reduce costs and improve results



Productivity Strategies

- Improving high school rigor and college readiness
- Easing and facilitating articulation and transfer
- Supporting students (especially adults) with some credit but no degree
- Providing students with more flexibility and options
- Decreasing remediation
- Incorporating technology into instruction
- Institutional efficiencies (streamlining administrative functions; joint purchasing agreements; using facilities on evenings and weekends; increasing faculty workloads; year-round operations)
- Carefully reviewing programs to eliminate duplicative programs and close low demand high cost programs that can't be justified by economic or labor market needs
- Providing degrees that match the jobs required by the economy
- Demanding institutions and systems to begin or continue reporting performance data
- Promoting collaboration among universities
- Creating and supporting new providers
- Incorporating performance-based funding



In Conclusion

Strategic and effective reform must recognize:

- Changing state economic conditions
- Changing student needs and behavior
- The importance/connection of higher education to state economic development
- A clear statement about statewide goals and priorities for higher education
- Data to track progress
- Accountability for results
- Fundamental reform in state funding and policy
- Review of how each part of the overall post-secondary system contributes to overall state goals
- Changes in institutional behavior

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