

Iowa Legislative Fiscal Bureau



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State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319
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Community College Governance

ISSUE

The Legislative Oversight Committee has requested information regarding statewide governance and coordination of community colleges.

AFFECTED AGENCIES

Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation, Department of Education

CODE AUTHORITY

Chapter 260C, Code of Iowa
Section 256.31, Code of Iowa

BACKGROUND

The issue of community college governance in Iowa was visited by the Legislative Higher Education Task Force in 1989 and by the Community College Governance System Study Committee established by the Legislative Council in 1999. For the 1999 study committee, the Legislative Service Bureau compiled a review of the work of the 1989 task force and subsequent community college legislation (**Attachment A**). The 1999 study committee issued a final report in January 2000 (**Attachment B**), which included recommendations regarding:

- *Development of a statewide strategic plan for community colleges.* A strategic plan has been developed and implemented and is discussed later in this **Issue Review**.
- *The collection and use of data submitted by the community colleges to the Department of Education.* The Department has developed and implemented a Management Information System (MIS) for the community colleges. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) will publish an updated **Issue Review** on implementation of the MIS later this year.
- *Incentives to institutions within the State's K-16 educational system to encourage partnering to share the costs of vocational-technical programs.* No incentives have been offered. The Department has clarified dual credit eligibility to encourage partnering between K-12 school districts and post-secondary institutions.

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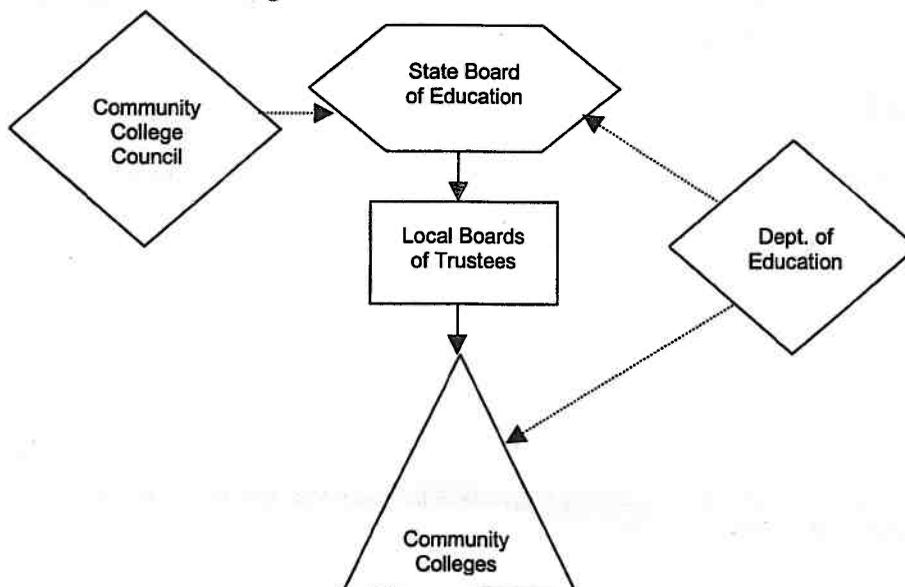
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- *Changes in statutory budgetary deadlines to allow community colleges to finalize budgets after completion of the General Assembly's annual appropriations process.* The deadlines have not been changed.

Nationally, governance structures for two-year public colleges vary from state to state, but there has been a trend away from local governance toward state-level governance. In 1997, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) reported 12 states where an independent state board governs community colleges and technical institutions. Another 18 states have a consolidated board that governs both two-year and four-year higher education institutions.

CURRENT SITUATION

In Iowa, community colleges are governed by locally-elected boards of directors, with certain statutory authority granted to the State Board of Education. The Department of Education provides statewide coordination and oversight.



State Governance

Chapter 260C, Code of Iowa, establishes the State Board of Education as the state board for community colleges and prescribes duties that include the development of rules and standards for the accreditation of community colleges. The Chapter also establishes a community colleges division in the Department of Education and assigns the duties of the Director of the Department of Education.

The Department has established administrative rules regarding administration, faculty, curriculum, and accreditation of community colleges (281-21, Iowa Administrative Code). Community colleges must maintain accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) and must meet additional requirements to maintain State accreditation. Each college undergoes a comprehensive State evaluation at least once every 10 years (following the NCA evaluation), with an interim evaluation conducted five years later. Additional evaluations may be conducted to address specific concerns as they arise.

Reorganization of Community College Division - The Division is reorganizing to focus more of its efforts on community colleges and lessen its involvement in secondary vocational education, following a reduction in staff of more than 25.0% since 1997. The Division of Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education will assume a greater role in the administration of federal Carl Perkins funds at the secondary level. The Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Development will continue to provide assistance with curriculum content for secondary vocational education programs.

Local Governance

Chapter 260C also establishes local governing boards for each community college, composed of five to nine members elected from within director districts. The local boards are authorized to determine curriculum and tuition rates, to enter into contracts, to establish policy and make rules, and to otherwise exercise the same powers and duties prescribed for local K-12 school boards.

Statewide Coordination

Sharing Agreements – Chapter 260C directs the Department to establish guidelines and an approval process (281-21, Iowa Administrative Code) for program and administrative sharing agreements between two or more community colleges or between a community college and a Regents institution. The Iowa Association of Community College Trustees (IACCT) publication, "An Inventory of Community College Cooperative Relationships," lists such agreements and many other types of cooperative ventures. The publication is available on the LFB web site at http://staffweb.legis.state.ia.us/lfb/subcom/ed_sub/reports.htm or by contacting the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees or the LFB.

Community College Council – Section 256.31, Code of Iowa, establishes the six-member Community College Council to make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding substantial issues related to the community college system. The Council consists of four members of the State Board of Education, a community college president, and a community college trustee.

Five-Year Strategic Plan – Section 256.31 specifically charges the Council with preparing and maintaining a written five-year strategic plan for the community college system in consultation with a thirteen-member working group of stakeholders. The stakeholder group includes representatives appointed by the Governor, community college trustees and presidents, majority and minority members of the House and Senate, the Iowa Association of School Boards, the Iowa State Education Association, and the Iowa Association of Business and Industry.

The first five-year strategic plan was approved by the State Board of Education for implementation beginning July 1, 2001. The plan, entitled "Shaping the Future," is available at www.state.ia.us/educate/ccwp/cc/pubs/shaping.pdf or by contacting the Department of Education. It identifies four strategic goals, with initiatives for accomplishing each. In January 2002, the Department of Education released a progress report on the strategic plan initiatives for which it has leadership and coordination responsibility. The report is available at www.state.ia.us/educate/ccwp/cc/pubs/shap02.pdf.

A first-year progress report on the initiatives will be presented to the State Board of Education in August 2002. The executive summary of that report and a listing of the strategic plan goals and initiatives is provided in **Attachment C**. The executive summary highlights a variety of achievements resulting from the strategic plan.

One of those achievements is the work of the Community College Performance Indicators Task Force that has drafted a set of indicators for consideration by the State Board of Education in August 2002 (**Attachment D**). The task force's proposed timeline calls for trial implementation in Spring 2003 and final approval by the State Board in December 2003. The indicators are intended to measure the performance of the statewide community college system as a whole. It is not the intent of the Department to report data on individual colleges as part of this initiative.

Each of the community colleges has an individual strategic plan. The Department is developing a web site to provide access to those plans and related progress reports. In the meantime, that information is available upon request from the colleges or the Department. Links to the web sites of each of the colleges are available at the Department's community college home page at www.state.ia.us/educate/ccwp/cc/index.html.

Coordinating Council for Post High School Education – The Coordinating Council for Post High School Education is a voluntary collaborative effort of the community colleges, private colleges, Regents universities, the Iowa Association of Private Business Schools, the Iowa Private Specialized School Association, the Iowa Public Broadcasting Board, the College Student Aid Commission, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Education.

The Council meets quarterly to review proposals from member institutions for new programs or program locations and identify significant concerns to be passed along to the appropriate governing or coordinating board charged with final approval of the proposal. The Council also publishes a digest of post-secondary education in Iowa and sponsors a web-based catalog of Iowa distance learning resources (www.iowalearns.org). A strategic planning committee of the Council addresses general areas of concern such as strengthening the role of education in Iowa's workforce development efforts.

Iowa Association of Community Colleges Trustees – All 15 community colleges maintain memberships in the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees (www.iaacct.com) and its sister organization, The Iowa Association of Community College Presidents. In addition to coordination of a common legislative agenda, the organizations provide opportunities for communication and collaboration between colleges.

Funding

Attachment E provides the percentage of community college revenue from various sources from 1991 to 2001. In 2001, the community colleges received 45.5% of their funding from State general aid and 39.0% from tuition and fees. The remaining revenue was derived from local property tax (5.9%), federal funds (3.4%), and other income (6.3%).

CURRENT CONCERNS

Conversations with legislators and recent media coverage have identified several areas of concern within the broad category of statewide governance and coordination of community colleges:

- *Standardization and appropriate implementation of policies in certain areas, such as student records and employee disciplinary actions.* Under current law, the local boards set these policies and oversee their implementation. The State Board of Education and the Department can address policy-related concerns at particular colleges or throughout the system through the accreditation process.

- *K-16 integration and, specifically, articulation with Regents universities and private four-year colleges.* Iowa Association of Community College's Inventory of Community College Cooperative Relationships (http://staffweb.legis.state.ia.us/lfb/subcom/ed_sub/reports.htm) highlights each community college's articulation agreements with specific four-year colleges. There are numerous articulation agreements for course-by-course transfers and several for dual enrollment or associate degree transfers, where students completing an associate degree may transfer to a four-year college as a junior.

Under a statewide articulation agreement with the Regents universities, a student who has obtained an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree will enter a Regents college of liberal arts and sciences with junior level status, having met all general education requirements. Students who have pursued the Associate Applied Science degree (AAS) are the least benefited by this agreement, since only 16 hours of general education credit are accepted as elective credit by the Regents institutions.

- *Communication with the public and General Assembly.* There has been a general concern among legislators about obtaining consistent and accurate information from all 15 community colleges. The management information system established in recent years was intended to address this concern. An LFB *Issue Review* to be published later this year will address the effectiveness of the system and its implementation to date.

In addition, communication concerns arose in regard to a recent investigation of transcript irregularities at Iowa Central Community College. Legislators learned of the investigation and its results via the media, and some have expressed concern that the college did not take a proactive role in informing the public or the General Assembly of what steps were taken to correct the situation and prevent a recurrence.

- *Fundraising.* Some legislators have expressed a desire to see community colleges make greater efforts and improve their effectiveness at obtaining contributions from alumni and other private donors. Each of the community colleges has a private foundation that conducts its private sector fundraising activities. The majority of the funds obtained in this manner are distributed as scholarships, although some may be used for building projects or other endeavors.

All of the colleges and their foundations participate with the Council for Resource Development (www.crdnet.org), an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges that provides education programs, publications, and other resources to improve the effectiveness of community colleges in securing resources in both the public and private sectors.

- *Other funding issues.* The LFB provided an *Issue Review* on community college funding in September 2001. That report is available at <http://staffweb.legis.state.ia.us/lfb/docs/IssReview/2002/IRRKM000.PDF> or upon request from the LFB. The following information is available in this *Issue Review*:
 - Community college general unrestricted revenue by source for FY 1991 through FY 2001 (**Attachment E**)
 - A state-by-state national comparison of revenue sources for community colleges (**Attachment F**)
 - The LFB's comparison of State and local per-pupil funding for different education entities in Iowa for FY 2001 and FY 2002 (**Attachment G**)

ALTERNATIVES

The LFB is available to help legislators explore alternatives in regard to the concerns listed above or others that may be identified.

In regard to the general issue of governance, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has published "Models of Postsecondary Education Coordination and Governance in the States" (**Attachment H**), which attempts to graphically demonstrate the various governance models in the 50 states. An essay by Aims C. McGuinness, entitled "Guidelines for States Considering Reorganization," is also provided (**Attachment I**). The Postsecondary Governance Structures Database on the Education Commission of the States web site (www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/31/02/3102.htm) contains detailed information on governance structures in all 50 states, as well as the full series of Aims C. McGuinness' essays on postsecondary governance.

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