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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

CHARTER

A National Dialogue: The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education

Authority

A National Dialogue: The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education (Commission) is established by the Secretary of Education and governed by the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (P.L. 92-463, as amended; 5 U.S.C.A. Appendix 2).

Background

Higher education in the United States encompasses a wide array of educational opportunities and programs. Students attend institutions of higher education offering programs that range from baccalaureate and advanced degrees to occupational training of less than one year. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, has benefited millions of students by making higher education more affordable and ensuring its quality. As we look to the future, it is imperative that we maintain a system of higher education that meets the needs of our diverse population, and in particular the needs of traditionally underserved communities; provides enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning; and addresses the economic and workforce needs of the country.

In particular, the country is encountering a significant change to its economic structure, resulting in unmet workforce needs. This is particularly true with respect to highly skilled workers and in the fields of mathematics and science. The need is clear and unavoidable: only 68 out of 100 entering 9th graders graduate from high school on time. Yet, 80 percent of our fastest-growing jobs will require some higher education. As the need for highly skilled workers continues to grow, institutions of higher education must assess whether they are providing the necessary coursework and incentives that will enable American students to compete in the new global economy.

Purpose and Functions

The purpose of the Commission is to consider how best to improve our system of higher education to ensure that our graduates are well prepared to meet our future workforce needs and are able to participate fully in the changing economy. To accomplish this purpose, the Commission shall consider Federal, state, local, and institutional roles in higher education and analyze whether the current goals of higher education are appropriate and achievable. By August 1, 2006, the Commission will provide its written recommendations to the Secretary.

Structure

The Commission will be composed of no more than 20 representatives appointed by the Secretary from the public and private sectors, as well as several ex officio members from the Department of Education and other Federal agencies. These representatives shall include former or current public and private college presidents, and may also include former elected officials, representatives of Fortune 500 corporations, the financial services industry, for-profit education companies, nonprofit education foundations, higher education researchers and other such group representatives as the Secretary deems appropriate. As representatives, the members will speak for the groups of persons they represent, drawing on their personal experience as members of these groups with respect to these issues.

The Secretary shall appoint members for the life of the Commission. Any vacancy in the Commission shall not affect its powers but shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment. The Secretary shall select one or more chairpersons from among the members of the Commission.

The Secretary names the Designated Federal Official (DFO) to the Commission. The Institute of Education Sciences, the Office of Postsecondary Education, and the Office of the Secretary will provide management and staff support.

Meetings

The Commission will conduct at least three (3) meetings in different parts of the country to obtain a public discussion of the issues. In furtherance of its duties, the Commission shall invite experts and members of the public to provide information and guidance.

The Commission shall meet at the call of the DFO or the DFO's designee, who is present at all meetings. Meetings are open to the public except as may be determined otherwise by the Secretary in accordance with Section 10(d) of the FACA. Adequate public notification will be given in advance of each meeting. Meetings are conducted and records of the proceedings kept, as required by applicable laws.

A quorum of the Commission consists of eight members. A lesser number of members may hold public meetings.

Estimated Annual Cost

Members will serve without compensation. Members may each receive reimbursement for travel expenses for attending Commission meetings, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by the Federal travel regulations. Funds will be provided by the Department of Education to administer the Commission. The estimated annual person-years of staff support are three (3) Full Time Equivalents. The estimated one-fiscal year non-pay cost will be approximately \$700,000.

Report

As representatives, the Commission's members will work independently of Departmental supervision to produce their report. The Commission's written report will address how best to improve our system of higher education, from increasing academic preparation in secondary school to building transitions for students between secondary school, higher education, and the workplace. Recommendations will be targeted at ensuring that our graduates are well prepared to meet our changing workforce needs and are able to participate fully in the new economy.

The Commission's report shall address the following questions. In addressing these questions, the report should address the appropriate roles for the various participants and how they intersect with one another.

How can State and local governments, with the assistance and encouragement of the Department of Education, better align secondary and higher education systems?

What changes are needed to ensure that higher education remains both affordable and accessible to students and their families?

What should be done to promote, sustain, and enhance world-class research and intellectual discourse?

How well are institutions of higher education preparing our students, especially nontraditional students and lifelong learners, to compete in the new global economy? What must be done to ensure that our system of higher education is able to keep up with the demand for highly skilled workers? How can the business community, other public and private sector organizations, and the higher education community work together to accomplish this goal?

Termination

The Commission shall terminate 30 days after submitting its report.

The Commission is hereby chartered in accordance with Section 14(b) of FACA. This charter expires two years from the date of filing or before as the Secretary determines.

Approved:

Sept. 23, 2005
Date

/s/ Margaret Spellings
Secretary

Filing date: October 14, 2005