



IDAHO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

650 W. State Street • P.O. Box 83720 • Boise, ID 83720-0037
208/334-2270 • FAX: 208/334-2632
email: board@asbc.idaho.gov

TRANSMITTAL # 7

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 31, 2006
TO: Workforce Development Council
FROM: Dwight A. Johnson, Executive Director
Idaho State Board Of Education
RE: Community College Initiative
ACTION REQUESTED: Endorse expanded access to post-secondary education

BACKGROUND:

Increasing access to Idaho's postsecondary institutions for all Idahoans is a top priority of the State Board of Education. The Board is seeking to increase access by proposing expanded scholarship opportunities for Idahoans to attend our colleges and universities and by encouraging efforts to develop expanded community college services statewide.

The United States and Idaho face the emergence of a knowledge based economy, with a demand for highly trained and educated workers, which is greater – and faster growing – than we have ever seen before. We also face fierce global competitors eager to meet this demand and land the good jobs and burgeoning opportunities that the new knowledge-based industries bring with them.

The nature of education, competition, jobs and skill demands is changing internationally in this new Century. The reality is that if Idaho can't assure employers a large and growing labor pool of people with the necessary skills and competencies, particularly in math and science, other nations assuredly will. Knowledge based jobs are going to go where the knowledgeable, well-trained workers are. And the promise of economic growth and prosperity is going to go with them.

The stakes couldn't be greater for Idaho. At issue is whether our standard of living will fall or rise in a global economic environment that demands ever larger numbers of highly trained and educated workers.

The stakes are equally high for individual Idahoans. In a period of overall prosperity two groups have been left behind: those with only a high school education, have not, on average, improved their economic status; and those with less than a high school education, have seen their real income actually decline.

The jobs that once supported a middle-class standard of living for workers with a high school degree or less are the ones that have been disappearing. Of the 30 fastest-growing occupations in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2006-07 Occupational Outlook Handbook, only three list short-term, on-the-job training as the most significant source of post-secondary education or training. Most require more: Eight require associate's degrees, 10 require bachelor's degrees and two require doctoral degrees.

“Education and training beyond high school” is a broad and inclusive concept, but whether we are talking about an educational path that leads to a specialist certificate or to a Ph.D., higher education is no longer just the most direct route to a middle-class life; it has become essentially the only route. It has become a necessity. The Board believes that expanding scholarships and increasing professional technical and community college services are essential parts in meeting this necessity.

Based on the best data we have, it is estimated nationally that of every 100 ninth graders 68 finish high school. Of those same 100 students, 39 go to college and only 16 finish an associate’s degree within three years of entering college or a bachelor’s degree within six years of entering college. The trends lines on these numbers for the past decade have been flat.

Currently, of 100 Idaho ninth graders 79 or 80 finish high school. Of those same 100 Idaho students 34 go onto college within a year of graduation somewhere in the United States and only 14 will graduate from college within six years. Therefore we see that Idaho has an above average high school attendance rate, but below average college attendance and completion rates.

It is imperative that we do better in increasing participation rates in postsecondary education in order to give our students better opportunities and to assure economic success in Idaho

This challenge is formidable and is rendered even more difficult by demographics – because the demand for more educated workers is converging with a sharp reduction in the growth of our labor force nationally. Given these demographic facts, if the new economic realities require us to increase our level of educational attainment to be competitive, then we must dramatically increase the percentages of students who complete high school ready to work and who receive skills and training beyond high school. This necessarily must include students from disadvantaged and minority groups; those with barriers and rehabilitation needs.

Community colleges, with their open admission policies and lower costs must be a central part of this effort. Community college services include lower division credits that transfer to baccalaureate programs as well as other critical services such as: Professional Technical degrees and certificates; Adult Basic Education; customized, rapid response workforce training; intensive student support services to promote student success; English as a second language; small business development assistance; and developmental and remedial course work.

Educators and political and civic leaders must do whatever it takes to give our economy an adequate stock of “human capital” and our people the tools necessary for satisfying, productive lives as citizens in a democracy and global economy. Significant changes within primary, secondary and postsecondary education as well as in public policy will be required to achieve more successful participation and higher levels of learning. More widespread, successful participation is essential.

Community colleges offer a tremendous key opportunity in meeting this goal. They are cost effective alternatives for students who are seeking an associate’s degree, working toward a four-year degree or who are under prepared to enter a four-year college or university. CC students also are able to take advantage of educational opportunities closer to the communities in which they reside to fulfill their educational goals.

Current Activity:

The legislature established an Interim Committee on Community Colleges. In addition, the State Board of Education has also established a subcommittee of its members on community colleges. These committees are working to develop specific proposals for consideration by the Governor and the State Legislature in January 2007.

The State Board is recommending a 75% increase in funding for the Idaho Promise A scholarship, which is based on merit. The Board has also established a working group to develop legislation on a state funded needs-based scholarship that could be presented to the legislature in January.

Staff Recommendation:

That the Workforce Development Council endorse efforts to increase access to affordable post-secondary education by expanding merit- and needs-based scholarships and by expanding community college services statewide.

Contact:	Primary:	Dwight Johnson	(208) 332-1565
	Secondary:	Luci Willits	(208) 332-1591