

PUBLIC AGENDA UPDATE
Chairwoman Hightman
Board Meeting
June 3, 2008

I want to give the Board and the higher education community a brief update on the activities and status of the Public Agenda initiative.

Collaboration/Inclusiveness

Dennis Jones and Aims McGuinness have spent enough time in Illinois over the past two months to qualify for in-state tuition. Here is a quick scroll through the roster of stakeholders, constituents, and other interested parties who the NCHEMS consultants have met with since our last Board meeting in April:

- Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education
- Executive board of the Chicagoland Chamber
- Chicago Sun-Times
- Women Employed
- Community College presidents, ICCB, ICCTA
- Students and recent graduates affiliated with the National Hispanic Institute (arranged by Father Minogue)
- Administrators at 2 predominantly Latino high schools, one private, the other CPS
- Research director for Chicago Public Schools
- Trustees of public universities

- Representatives of the University of Chicago and the Argonne National Lab
- Illinois Committee on Black Concerns in Higher Education
- Individual meetings with Reps. Chapin Rose and Linda Chapa LaVia, Sens. Mattie Hunter, Ed Maloney, Kim Lightford, Brad Burzynski.
- Briefings for the Legislative Education Caucus and the Senate Higher Education Committee.

More meetings are scheduled for later this week. More meetings will be scheduled after those.

The point of this is two-fold:

- We want all stakeholders in higher education to have a stake in this Public Agenda. This will be an agenda for the state of Illinois, and all of us have a stake in building economic vitality and economic opportunity throughout Illinois. We have attempted to seize every opportunity to enable your voices to be heard.
- Second, we are listening. This has not been just an exercise in meeting for meeting sake. The NCHEMS consultants, the IBHE staff, and the Public Agenda Task Force are attempting to solicit a broad spectrum of opinion because those opinions are valuable in informing the research, in developing a consensus, and in shaping the Public Agenda. Perhaps the most notable example is the counsel offered by

the community college system, Women Employed, and several others: pay more attention to adult education.

- Pay more attention those young people who departed the K-12 system without a diploma and get them to a postsecondary credential that will make them employable.
- Pay more attention to the re-entry adults, those in the workforce who need to advance their skills, to return to college for an upgrade of credentials or a new degree.
- Those voices led the Task Force to add a new goal to those identified by NCHEMS: give adult education a prominent role in the Public Agenda for Illinois Higher Education.

Regional Meetings

The NCHEMS road show is far from over. Beginning next week and ending two weeks later, the consultants, accompanied by IBHE staff, will conduct 17 regional forums at community colleges throughout Illinois, from John A. Logan College in the far southern region to John Wood Community College on the western border to Richard J. Daley College to Danville Area Community College to Decatur, Peoria, Rockford, Belleville, Des Plaines, Grayslake, Glen Ellyn, Moline, Kankakee, South Holland, Sugar Grove, and back to Chicago. And Olney.

The purpose of these forums is to present an economic and educational portrait of each region and ask local business and civic leaders, labor and elected officials, employers and educators what they regard as the central concerns and challenges in their neck of the woods, and how the state helps or hinders their effort to find solutions.

These are fact-finding missions, and we encourage everyone here to try to attend these forums to help us learn the facts.

Task Force Meetings

The Public Agenda Task Force met on May 1 at Roosevelt University and has scheduled its next meeting for June 20 at Robert Morris College in Chicago.

On May 1, Task Force members discussed the themes identified through the research of NCHEMS and the discussions with various stakeholders, and reached a consensus that they would serve as goals to guide the development of a public agenda. NCHEMS is devising goal statements around these six themes:

- Improving educational attainment among underrepresented groups,
- Address affordability,
- Reduce geographic disparities,
- Increase production of postsecondary credentials,
- Integrate education and innovation assets,
- Increase educational attainment of adults.

There also was discussion of benchmarks, which NCHEMS will develop, as standards of comparison and measures of progress in reaching the goals of the Public Agenda. Among the options are comparison of Illinois to its sister states in the Midwest, to other large states with diverse populations, to best-performing states, or to other countries.

A few other key points raised by Task Force members and members of our advisory committee:

- Our goals for education attainment should be set at the highest level of success for students.
- We need to think of affordability as a shared responsibility between students and taxpayers.
- The state must capitalize on the research and innovation activities of higher education.
- The planning process should consider the broad spectrum of values regarding the cultural and quality-of-life contributions of higher education.
- The regional forums should consider quality of learning issues.

Next Steps

NCHEMS has prepared goal statements that articulate the aspirations and intent of the master planning process. These goals will be presented at the regional forums where the consultants will ask what barriers exist to achieving them.

At the June 20 Task Force meeting, the consultants will report on the regional forums, present refined goal statements to guide development of a preliminary Public Agenda, and explain their audit of state policies that hinder or advance vital state interests.

We are pleased with the progress this planning process has made in the past six months. Much has been accomplished.

But there is much left to do. As always, I want to emphasize that we need your help, your input, and your support.