

Student Access and Success Coordinating Council of Ohio (SASCCO)

Ohio Board of Regents
Main Conference Room

Friday, January 23, 2004
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Present: Bruce Beeghly, Member, Ohio Board of Regents - Co-Chair
Christina R. Milano, Executive Director,
National College Access Network (NCAN) - Co-Chair

Maria Boss, Larry H. Christman, Jennifer Conner (for Chad Wick), Jeannette Graselli Brown, Shane R. Hollett, N. Kip Howard, Leonard J. Hubert, Thomas M. Humphries, Steven Klein, Todd Locke, James E. McCollum, Maureen O'Brien (for Jacqueline Williams), Deborah L. Owens Fink, Brian A. Paskvan, Wendell Schick, Shannon Wagner (for Samuel Gresham, Jr.), Jane Wiechel, Wayne White

Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) Staff

Jonathan Tafel, Jamie Abel, Eric R. Almonte, David Barber, Jocelyn Frasier, Tom L. Rudd, Leslie J. Sawyer, Charles Shahid

Guest

Chris McGovern, Chief Executive Officer, eMergingMarketing

1. Welcome

Regent Beeghly opened the first SASCCO meeting by welcoming participants and providing an introduction about the Ohio Board of Regents and its role. He stated that the number one goal of the Board of Regents is to increase access, i.e., to provide an opportunity for more Ohioans to successfully participate in higher education which, in turn, is essential to the advancement of the Knowledge Economy.

2. Introduction of Members and Staff

Ms. Milano welcomed attendees and asked that they introduce themselves and describe the mission of their organizations. In addition to the two co-chairs, representatives of 18 of the member organizations and eight Board of Regents' staff attended.

3. Charge to the Council

Ms. Milano discussed the importance of marketing higher education and its benefits. She explained that SASCCO would be taking a lead in the development of a statewide marketing strategy to help everyone in Ohio understand the importance of postsecondary education in enhancing the quality of life for the citizenry and improving the economic viability of the state. She mentioned that, as the group moves forward with its work, it must keep in mind those most at risk for not having access to a college education: the adult, low-income, and underrepresented populations. She also shared with the group a study which reviewed efforts of 87 programs and initiatives to market college education.

The following are some of the results of the study conducted by a social marketing group, the Communication Works Company:

- There has been no national marketing effort to encourage at-risk populations to pursue postsecondary education.
- Very few hard-hitting messages and no clear-cut message about the product (higher education) exist.
- There is no message delivery in the popular culture.
- Strategies that have been developed have not been used or are underutilized.
- Few outreach efforts are directed to and no materials have been developed specifically for parents.
- Programs are not well-coordinated or well-planned.
- Objectives are described in vague terms.
- There is limited evidence of success of outreach strategies and efforts.
- Best practices typically are based on subjective feelings and anecdotal information.
- Funding for outreach and awareness campaigns has been minimal.

Ms. Milano noted that the above-referenced study cited a small number of exemplary initiatives including Cleveland Scholarship Programs, Inc. She then reviewed the three principal goals of the Council:

- Collaborate and provide a venue for networking.
- Move forward a statewide marketing campaign.
- Establish measures for success.

4. Overview of Access in Ohio

- a. Jon Tafel, Vice Chancellor, Educational Linkages and Access, presented slides and information on *The "Four A's" of College Access*. He cited examples of the barriers in the four access dimensions: Availability of programs at times and in places convenient to students; Affordability, the financial ability (or perceived ability) to pay for college; Academic Preparation, which enables a student to transition successfully from high school to college and degree completion; and Aspiration, the motivation to pursue education beyond high school.
- b. Tom Rudd, Director, Student Financial Access, presented slides showing data on college participation rates in Ohio which demonstrated that Ohio is lagging behind the nation.
- c. Shane Hollett, Executive Director of the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN), provided a program overview of OCAN and some program highlights including the fact that the number of OCAN programs has grown to 33 and the OCAN/GEAR UP Conference will be held in Canton, Ohio, October 3-5, 2004. Student Loan Funding will host a reception at the Football Hall of Fame. He informed the Council that OCAN is serving as a national model, as it was designed to be.

5. OBR Communication Strategies

- a. **Knowledge Economy Awareness Initiative** -- Jocelyn Frasier, Assistant Director, Communications, distributed information packets with scripts on the Knowledge Economy Awareness Campaign. OBR used this information in

presentations for business, community, and education leaders around the state to enlist the support of the “grass tops” in promoting the need for increased higher education participation in Ohio. Board of Regents’ staff followed up the presentations with community forums to discuss how the communities could collaborate to help more students and families pursue postsecondary education. Ms. Frasier explained that the Knowledge Economy Awareness Campaign is shifting from marketing to include more emphasis on access. She reported that four focus groups will be convened (in Portsmouth, a Toledo suburb, Columbus, and Wooster) to determine what means and message can best reach middle school students and their families about the importance and benefits of higher education and early preparation.

- b. Need for a statewide higher education marketing strategy** -- Jamie Abel, Assistant Director, Communications, talked about past and future statewide strategies to market higher education. He reported on what we learned from the “*Success Express*” (*Bus*) *Campaign*. First, that there is a “real need” to inform people about the importance of education beyond high school (68% of adult volunteers believed there was a problem with the number of students in their communities not attending); second, going out and talking to students is an effective means of communication (more than 90% of students rated the program as valuable) and third, that for an outreach or awareness initiative such as the “*Success Express*” to be effective, it needs more staff and time to spread the word, beginning with the “grass tops.”

Mr. Abel advised that in moving forward with the development of a statewide marketing plan, SASCCO should be aware of the draft policy option from the Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy that calls for a statewide marketing strategy to increase college participation. He emphasized that Ohio needs a statewide message similar to that of other states -- Kentucky for example -- including billboards, signs, etc., and that the state needs to brand Ohio education, i.e., develop a central theme for the various programs to align their individual messages.

6. Student Portal

David Barber, Consultant, Academic and Access Programs, and Eric Almonte, Assistant Director, Access Initiatives, delivered a PowerPoint presentation on a potential Web-based state student information portal. The purpose of the portal would be to provide increased information and assistance related to college and career planning. They shared the recommendations from the Student Portal Advisory Committee.

7. Request for Collaboration

Dr. Jon Tafel raised the possibility of sending out a formal request from the Board of Regents to organizations and companies for support of access initiatives. Support could include expertise, staff, materials, funding, etc. The intent of the request would be to help build a collaborative statewide strategic plan for increasing access to higher education in Ohio.

Discussion points:

- SASCCO may want to consider representation from the Business Roundtable.
- “Buy-in” is needed from every organization in the state related to the education of children.
- We need to educate corporate leaders and enlist their support for education beyond certificate and work-related training programs.

8. Topics for Discussion

a. How do we successfully market the need for higher education in Ohio?

Discussion points:

- Television is the main medium today and the medium most people follow.
- TV is expensive and it takes a long time for TV to have a sustained impact.
- Television requires that different messages be targeted to different audiences.
- Radio is another important and powerful medium.
- Advertising through the workplace should be considered as a way to reach a high percentage of the nontraditional student market.
- We must determine who the target market is, where they are, and what level of information they should get in order for the targeted message to have the desired impact.
- How do we determine what the core message should be?
- The broader message should include both access and success.
- The other important message is the impact of education on the economic well being of the State.
- The business community has to be part of the vision.
- We need more dialogue with business and industry to better understand what their needs are.
- We need an inventory of current marketing initiatives and access programs in Ohio.
- We need a broad marketing theme or brand that all individual initiatives and programs can use.
- The ability of the target audience to identify with the messenger is important to the success of the message.
- Students and families should have input in crafting the message, especially the underserved who are most at risk for not going on to college and who need to believe in the message that they can participate in higher education.
- There is a need to reach students (and their families) at an earlier age and early in their educational careers.
- It may be useful to conduct internal marketing campaigns with teachers, principals, guidance counselors, superintendents, etc.

b. How do we measure the effectiveness of college access strategies, programs, and practices?

Discussion points:

- We need to consider all the various target groups to determine success measures.

- Because our efforts will be long term, it is important for business and others to be patient and wait to see the impact of access initiatives.
- SASSCO is not really at a point in its work to have a full-blown discussion on measures of success.

c. What is the value of a Web-based state student information portal?

Discussion points:

- At-risk populations will not necessarily benefit from a portal because many of these families still do not have access to a computer and/or fear the technology. Any plan for a portal must be cognizant of and sensitive to their needs.
- Research shows a decreasing disparity in use of technology vs. income level with more low-income families using the Internet, but it remains important to ensure that low-income and underserved populations continue to have increased opportunities to access the Internet because of its wealth of information.
- It is critical that portal language be basic and user-friendly enough to be understood by the students and parents it is designed to serve.
- We must be careful when attempting to make portal language simple and user-friendly so that it does not insult the target audience.
- The Portal would be a tool and, as such, must be used in the schools along with teachers and/or advisors to help guide students through the process.
- The Portal is not the answer to all needs and will never replace teachers, advisors, and guidance counselors, but should serve as an enhancement to the services which teachers, advisors, and counselors provide.
- We need a variety of approaches, with multiple levels of complexity, to address the access problem -- a portal is one of many approaches.
- The Portal is a good and needed tool that can serve as a common or central point of information.
- Parents of Pre-K and elementary school children could use a portal to obtain information from a central location early in the educational process.
- A portal could be used at places of employment to make weekly messages available about postsecondary education.
- It is critical to look at the integrity of the information that is shared via a portal.

d. What is the best way to approach potential access collaborators for financial and other support?

Discussion points:

- Access and student success issues need to be approached in the context of state economic development.
- Ohio could possibly qualify for workforce development funds as the State of Texas has done.
- We could seek federal funding, as Ohio is well-positioned at the national level to do this, especially because of the success of programs such as NCAN, OCAN, and GEAR UP, and the implementation of common academic content standards.

9. Next Meeting (date & agenda items)

The group agreed on the need for the identification of topics for future discussion and the possible need for the formation of subcommittees to work on the selected topics. The next meeting will probably be scheduled in May.

10. Adjournment

Regent Beeghly thanked the Regents' staff for their commitment and efforts in the area of access, thanked representatives for attending the meeting, and adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.