UA3/9/5 Improving the Education Attainment of Kentuckians at All Levels

WKU President's Office
IF WE ARE TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATION ATTAINMENT OF KENTUCKIANS AT ALL LEVELS, WE MUST ADDRESS THE LEAKS IN THE PROVERBIAL EDUCATION PIPELINE THROUGH INCREASED COLLABORATION, DECREASED REMEDIATION, AND A MULTI-FACETED STUDENT FOCUS.

COLLABORATION

YOU CAN GET AN IDEA OF WHAT I MEAN BY COLLABORATION JUST BY LOOKING AT THE PRESENTERS IN THIS SESSION. WE REPRESENT EVERY LEVEL OF EDUCATION.

AT FIRST REFLECTION, IT MAY BE A STRETCH FOR SOME OF YOU TO IMAGINE WHAT DR. TOWNLEY’S PRESENTATION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD HAS TO DO WITH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, BUT LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT SUCCESS AT EVERY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS AT SUBSEQUENT LEVELS.
I believe, however, that we as educators have perhaps taken a backwards approach over the years.

We have worked decade after decade to align elementary education with middle school and middle school with high school, and more recently, particularly as a result of higher education reform in 1997, we are looking at aligning secondary education with postsecondary education.

However, there is too often a void in the alignment process - a disconnect.

All too often we have failed to focus on specific workforce needs - so I say backwards in the sense that we have worked from the beginning of the pipeline to the end, when perhaps we need to look at what we need as our end result and move toward the beginning with our curriculum design.
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF THIS ALL-TOO-OFTEN-ABSENT PIECE OF PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM PLANNING, AND WE ARE MAKING AGGRESSIVE EFFORTS TO EXTEND THE DIALOGUE INTO THE WORKFORCE.

FOR EXAMPLE: WKU REALIZES THE KEY ROLE WE WILL PLAY IN THE INFLUX OF BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN JOBS IN THE HARDIN COUNTY AREA WITH THE BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE MOVEMENT THAT IS UNDERWAY AT FT. KNOX.

WE HAVE INITIATED ONGOING DISCUSSIONS WITH REGIONAL WORKFORCE BOARDS, AREA DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS, THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IN ELIZABETHTOWN-HARDIN COUNTY AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES, AND ALSO WITH THE ARMY TO DETERMINE WHAT BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND THE MILITARY SEE AS THEIR GREATEST WORKFORCE NEEDS AS THESE DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT UNFOLD.
THROUGH THESE JOINT EFFORTS, WE HAVE PINPOINTED SPECIFIC WORKFORCE SHORTAGES THAT ARE LIKELY DUE TO THE CHANGE IN EDUCATION LEVELS OF THE MILITARY PERSONNEL TRANSFERRING IN AS WELL AS THE SHORTAGE OF THE EXISTING REGIONAL WORKFORCE THAT WILL RESULT FROM THE CHANGE IN POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE AREA.

IT IS FROM THAT VANTAGE POINT THAT WE HAVE ESTABLISHED CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMS TO BE OFFERED AT THE WKU RADCLIFF FACILITY WHICH IS JUST A MILE AWAY FROM FT. KNOX AND WHICH WE JUST OPENED A FEW MONTHS AGO.

SIMILAR TO THE WORK DONE BY KCTCS IN PUTTING TOGETHER THE KENTUCKY COAL ACADEMY WHICH SERVES FOUR KCTCS SCHOOLS ADDRESSING THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF THAT REGION - NEEDS THAT WERE MADE EVIDENT TO THEM THROUGH DIALOGUE WITH MANY OF THE SAME TYPE OF GROUPS I JUST MENTIONED.
AS EDUCATORS, WE MUST LOOK AT REGIONAL, STATE, AND GLOBAL WORKFORCE NEEDS TO DETERMINE WHAT POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS TO OFFER, AND WE MUST COLLABORATE NOT ONLY WITHIN EDUCATION BUT ALSO WITH BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND THOSE WHO MAKE POLICY DECISIONS THAT AFFECT EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR COMMONWEALTH.

POSTSECONDARY LEADERS RECOGNIZE THIS AND KNOW THAT IT WILL TAKE US ALL WORKING TOGETHER TO MEET STATE NEEDS.

ONE EXAMPLE OF A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION, INDUSTRY AND POLICY LEADERS IS CONNECT KENTUCKY - NOW OPERATING AS CONNECTED NATION (YOU MAY WANT TO EXPLAIN THE WKU CONNECTION).

WITH CONNECTED NATION, TECHNOLOGY-MINDED BUSINESSES, GOVERNMENT ENTITIES, AND UNIVERSITIES ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO ACCELERATE TECHNOLOGY AND NETWORK CAPACITY IN KENTUCKY, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS.
THIS IS ONE OF THE PIVOTAL MOVES IN THE PROGRESSION OF PARTNERSHIP BUILDING OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PARTNERING TO PROVIDE A MEANS TO MEETING STATEWIDE NEEDS. AND IT'S THROUGH THESE PARTNERSHIPS THAT WE WILL TAKE EDUCATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL. Kentucky's economic and quality of life needs will largely be met.

EDUCATION PARTNERS MUST WORK WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TO DECIDE WHICH DIRECTION THE EDUCATION PIPELINE MUST FLOW. EXAMINING AREAS OF NEED, LEVELS OF COMPETENCY, AND THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF ATTAINMENT ARE THE CRITICAL PART OF EDUCATION ALIGNMENT.

REMEDICATION

A SECOND POINT OF ATTENTION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IS THE HIGH LEVEL OF REMEDIATION NECESSARY FOR KENTUCKY STUDENTS ONCE THEY ENTER THE POSTSECONDARY LEVEL.
ACCORDING TO A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, 46% OF KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES NEEDED REMEDIATION IN ONE OR MORE SUBJECTS: 22% IN READING, 35% IN ENGLISH, AND 35% IN MATH.

THESE HIGH NUMBERS ARE COSTLY, AND NOT JUST IN DOLLARS.

STUDENTS REQUIRING REMEDIATION ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF COLLEGE AS THOSE WHO REQUIRE NO REMEDIATION, SO NOT ONLY DO WE SPEND MORE ON THEM, WELOSE THEM IN GREATER NUMBERS.

AND FOR THESE STUDENTS, TAKING REMEDIAL CLASSES ADDS TO THE COST OF THEIR EDUCATION, BECAUSE IT TAKES THEM MORE TIME TO FINISH IF THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL.

EDUCATORS AND POLICY MAKERS CONTINUE TO DISCUSS THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO UNDER-PREPARED STUDENTS:
IS IT THE LACK OF ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE STATE P-12 ASSESSMENT AND THE EXPECTATIONS FOR POSTSECONDARY LEVEL OF STUDY?

IS IT AN INADEQUATELY PREPARED TEACHER?

IS IT A LACK OF EARLY FOCUS ON PRODUCING COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS?

MOST WOULD AGREE THAT A COMBINATION OF THESE FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROBLEM, AND WE MUST ACT AGGRESSIVELY TO EVALUATE AND REMEDY EACH OF THESE ISSUES.

MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY OFFERS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF COMBATING THE REMEDIATION PROBLEM. BEFORE THEIR STUDENTS ARRIVE FOR FALL CLASSES THEY ALLOW FOR SUMMER REMEDIATION FOLLOWED BY THE RETAKING THE REQUIRED PLACEMENT TEST. THIS PROMOTES SUCCESS AND A TIMELY PROGRESSION TOWARD GRADUATION.
TO ADDRESS BETTER EDUCATION AND PREPARATION OF TEACHER LEADERS, THE COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION RECENTLY AUTHORIZED THE CREATION OF THE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO BE OFFERED AT WKU, EKU, AND NKU.

WKU HAS FOUR AREAS OF FOCUS IN OUR ED PROGRAM, INCLUDING TRACKS FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE PERSONNEL, AND NON-PROFIT SECTOR CAREER EMPLOYEES.

GRADUATES OF THESE PROGRAMS WILL WORK WITH EDUCATION PARTNERS TO IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING AT ALL LEVELS.

AND THE PLACEMENT OF THESE PROGRAMS AT COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES ACROSS KENTUCKY WILL INCREASE ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO PURSUE A TERMINAL DEGREE, WHICH IS CRITICAL FOR THE UPWARD MOBILITY OF OUR STATE'S EDUCATORS AND WILL INDEED HELP ADDRESS THE NEED TO BETTER EDUCATE THE EDUCATORS.
A THIRD FOCUS OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IS TO PROVIDE A MULTI-FACETED STUDENT FOCUS.

WHILE WE RECOGNIZE WE MUST STRENGTHEN THE ESSENTIAL CONVENTIONAL FOCUS ON TRADITIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT, POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEGUN A CRITICAL DEVIATION:

THROUGH PROJECT GRADUATION, KENTUCKY'S UNIVERSITIES LAUNCHED AN OUTREACH EFFORT, OFFERING INCENTIVES AND SERVICES TO STUDENTS WITH 90 OR MORE CREDIT HOURS BUT NO DEGREE.

THIS OUTREACH HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO ENCOURAGE THIS UNTAPPED POPULATION TO RETURN TO SCHOOL FOR DEGREE COMPLETION.
14 degrees were awarded in June - 7 at WKU - and more than 200 people in this category are now registered for classes across the state. We expect this number to grow dramatically this year.

If we are to meet our goals for awarding bachelor degrees / doubling the numbers of Kentuckians with bachelor degrees, we simply must find ways to bring non-traditional students back - that means providing financial aid for part time students, offering on-line programs, giving credit for life experience, and other incentives.

You, as employers, must help in that regard. If an adult who is currently employed has an incentive to complete a degree - typically that means increased salary and promotion opportunities - then they are much more likely to finish.
AN ADDITIONAL FOCUS THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED IS THAT OF THE GIFTED STUDENT. RECENT LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THE NEED FOR INCREASED HIGH-LEVEL CLASSES TO PRODUCE ENHANCED LEVELS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE, ESPECIALLY IN THE STEM AREAS.

WKU HAS INITIATED A STATEWIDE PROGRAM THAT EXPANDS THIS EFFORT AND SERVES THE ENTIRE COMMONWEALTH.

THE GATTON ACADEMY OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE, IS A RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM HOUSED AT WKU WHICH OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR 120 HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS FROM KENTUCKY TO ENROLL IN THE ACADEMY AND LEARN IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH OFFERS ADVANCED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

THE STUDENTS WHO ATTEND THE GATTON ACADEMY SIMULTANEOUSLY EARN 60 COLLEGE CREDIT HOURS WHILE COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS, STUDY UNDER AND ENGAGE IN RESEARCH WITH TENURED PROFESSORS.
THE PURPOSE OF THE ACADEMY IS TO PROVIDE THESE STUDENTS, WHO TRADITIONALLY LEAVE THE STATE FOR THE IVY LEAGUE, WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO STAY IN KENTUCKY. THERE ARE 14 SUCH ACADEMIES IN THE UNITED STATES, AND RESEARCH SHOWS THAT WHEN GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACCELERATE THEIR EDUCATION IN THEIR HOME STATE, THEY TEND TO STAY IN THEIR STATE IN GREATER NUMBERS.

OUT OF THE 54 WHO GRADUATED THIS YEAR, 9 ARE STAYING IN KENTUCKY TO ATTEND KENTUCKY INSTITUTIONS. BEFORE THE ACADEMY, NEARLY ALL WOULD HAVE LEFT KENTUCKY NEVER TO RETURN.

THE NEW SPACE SCIENCE CENTER AT MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY IS OFFERING A UNIQUE DEGREE OPPORTUNITY THAT WILL BE UTILIZED BY THESE SAME CALIBER STUDENTS.

BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS ARE MAKING THE EFFORT TO BRING P-12 STUDENTS ON TO OUR CAMPUSES TO PROMOTE HIGH-LEVEL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH PROGRAMS SUCH AS GOVERNOR'S SCHOLARS, SUPER SATURDAYS, AND ACADEMIC CAMPS.
IT IS THROUGH UNIVERSITY EXPOSURE, HIGH EXPECTATIONS, AND ACADEMIC CHALLENGES THAT OUR GIFTED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL BECOME LEADERS IN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITIES, and more importantly in Kentucky communities.

KEEPING THESE YOUNG PEOPLE IN KENTUCKY IS CRITICAL TO OUR FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS AND ALSO PROVIDES THE PIPLINE FOR OUR STATE’S FUTURE LEADERS.

These are strategic investments and an important component of our economic development efforts.

EARLY INTERVENTION IS A CRITICAL PIECE AS WELL. WE ARE ALL ENCOURAGED BY THE PARTNERSHIPS INITIATED THROUGH THE GEAR UP PROGRAM, WHICH ENCOURAGES MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS TO STAY IN SCHOOL, STUDY HARD, AND TAKE THE RIGHT COURSES FOR COLLEGE PREPARATION.
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS MUST CONTINUE TO WORK TOWARD CHANGING WITH THE NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS AND PRODUCING WORLD CLASS PROGRAMS.

WE WELCOME THE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE OTHERS AROUND THIS TABLE, AS WELL AS THE CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND WORKFORCE PROFESSIONALS. And I must add one more-the Ky. General Assembly. Education—all of Kentucky's education must be a higher priority—everything flows from that—pricing, quality, cohesion. It is through these collaborations that we might address our deficiencies, improve our services, and our level to the top of workforce preparation. A seamless pipeline that straight to success defines success.