WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18B-1-1A

§18B-1-1a. Legislative intent; findings; establishment of state goals for higher education and education; creation of partnership to achieve state goals and objectives.

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this section to establish state goals for public higher education which benefit the citizens of the State of West Virginia.

(b) It is further the intent of the Legislature that this section be read and implemented in conjunction with the accountability system established in article one-d of this chapter and that any reference to this section in this code includes the provisions of that article.

(c) Findings. -- The Legislature finds that post-secondary education is vital to the future of West Virginia. For the state to realize its considerable potential in the 21st Century, it must have a system for the delivery of post-secondary education which is competitive in the changing national and global environment, is affordable for the state and its citizenry and has the capacity to deliver the programs and services necessary to meet regional and statewide needs.

The Legislature further finds that it is vitally important for young people entering the workforce to have the education and skills to succeed in today's high-technology, knowledge-based economy. It is equally important for working-age adults who are the majority of the current and potential workforce also to possess the requisite education and skills to compete successfully in the workplace and to have the opportunity to continue learning throughout their lives. The future of the state rests not only on how well its youth are educated, but also on how well it educates its entire population of any age.

The Legislature further finds that providing access to a high-quality and affordable post-secondary education is a state responsibility and, while states spent more than $70 billion on public higher education in two thousand six, they are not maximizing that investment. The Legislature recognizes the efforts of the National Conference of State Legislatures' Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education in producing a report to assist the states in higher education policymaking. According to the commission report, "Transforming Higher Education: National Imperative -- State Responsibility", the United States is losing its competitive advantage in a new, high-tech, highly mobile global economy. This lack of competitiveness is a matter of the highest urgency for federal and state policymakers and higher education is at the center of this discussion. The report further states that "higher education is both the problem and the solution" because the nation has failed to focus on how higher education energizes American competitiveness and revitalizes the states. Pursuant to these findings, the commission made some specific recommendations addressed to the states which include the following:

(1) Define clear state goals;

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(2) Identify your state's strengths and weaknesses;

(3) Know your state demographic trends for the next ten to thirty years;

(4) Identify a place or structure to sustain the public policy agenda;

(5) Hold institutions accountable for their performance;

(6) Rethink funding formulas and student aid;

(7) Make a commitment to access, success and innovation;

(8) Encourage partnerships;

(9) Give special attention to adult learners; and

(10) Focus on productivity.

All of these recommendations are useful in providing policy guidance and have been given careful consideration in the development of this section and article one-d of this chapter.

(d) Establishment of state goals. -- In recognition of its importance to the citizens of West Virginia, the Legislature hereby establishes the following goals for public higher education in the state:

(1) The ultimate goal of public education is to enhance the quality of life for citizens of the State of West Virginia.

(2) The overall focus of public education is on developing and maintaining a process of lifelong learning which is as seamless as possible at all levels, encourages citizens of all ages to increase their knowledge and skills and provides ample opportunities for them to participate in public higher education.

(3) Higher education collaborates with public education and other providers to offer education opportunities:

(A) To individuals of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds in all areas of the state; and

(B) To overcome financial barriers to participation for both traditional and nontraditional students.

(4) Higher education seeks to enhance state efforts to diversify and expand the economy by focusing available resources on programs and courses which best serve students, provide the greatest opportunity for job creation and retention and are most supportive of emerging high-technology and knowledge-based businesses and industries.

(5) Higher education creates a learning environment that is student-friendly and that

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encourages and assists students in the completion of degree requirements, certifications or skill sets within a reasonable period of time.

(6) The learning environment expands participation for the increasingly diverse student population and responds to the needs of the current workforce and other nontraditional students.

(7) Through the establishment of innovative curricula and assessment efforts, state institutions of higher education ensure that students graduate from nationally recognized and accredited programs and meet or exceed national and international standards for performance in their chosen fields as evidenced through placement and professional licensure examinations.

(8) Higher education promotes academic research and innovation to achieve measurable growth in West Virginia's knowledge-based economic sector.

(9) State institutions of higher education emphasize productivity and strive to exceed the performance and productivity levels of peer institutions. In return, and within the constraints of fiscal responsibility, the state seeks to invest in institutions so that they may adequately compensate faculty, classified employees and other employees at a competitive level to attract and retain high quality personnel.

(10) State institutions of higher education are committed to a shared responsibility with faculty, staff, students and their communities to provide access to the knowledge and to promote acquisition of the skills and abilities necessary to establish and maintain physical fitness and wellness.

(A) Programs that encourage healthy lifestyles are essential for the vibrancy of the institutions of higher education, for the well-being of the communities they serve and for the state as a whole.

(B) Increasing the fitness levels of adults on college and university campuses is critically important for the people of West Virginia, not only for disease prevention, but also, and perhaps most importantly, to enhance the overall quality of life.

(C) While individuals must bear the primary responsibility for their own health, it is imperative that the institutions provide appropriate education and support focused on enriching and expanding the short- and long-term views and attitudes towards physical activity, understanding the principles of wellness and their application to a healthy lifestyle, understanding what components are a necessary part of an all-around healthy lifestyle and learning how to set and achieve realistic goals aimed at establishing healthy habits for the benefit of long-term health and well-being.

(e) Education partnership to achieve state goals and objectives. -- If public institutions of higher education are to provide services that meet the needs of state citizens as outlined in

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this section and article one-d of this chapter, then West Virginia must create and participate in a partnership across various education organizations that recognizes the valuable contributions each member of the group can make. In addition to public education as outlined in section four, article one, chapter eighteen of this code and in addition to the State of West Virginia, key members of this partnership include the state institutions of higher education, the Council for Community and Technical College Education and the Higher Education Policy Commission.

(1) State institutions of higher education. -- The institutions are the cornerstone of efforts to provide higher education services that meet the needs of state citizens. To varying degrees, and depending upon their missions, these institutions serve the state in three major ways:

(A) Instruction. -- By providing direct instruction to students along with the student services necessary to support the instructional mission. These services have two primary goals:

(i) To produce college graduates who have the knowledge, skills and desire to make valuable contributions to society; and

(ii) To provide opportunities for citizens to engage in life-long learning to enhance their employability and their overall quality of life.

(B) Public service. -- By providing an occupational home for experts in a variety of fields and by serving as the educational home for students. In these capacities, institutions create a large and varied pool of high quality human resources capable of making valuable contributions to business and industry, local and state governments and communities. The following are examples of the types of public service that higher education institutions have to offer:

(i) Workforce development, primarily through community and technical colleges, to meet the immediate and long-term needs of employers and employees;

(ii) Technical assistance to state and local policymakers as they work to address challenges as diverse as ensuring that West Virginia's citizens receive quality health care, assisting in the development of a solid transportation infrastructure and ensuring that public school teachers have enriching professional development opportunities; and

(iii) Opportunities to learn and serve in local communities, to teach civic responsibility and to encourage civic engagement.

(C) Research. -- By conducting research at state institutions of higher education, particularly Marshall University and West Virginia University, to enhance the quality of life in West Virginia in the following ways:

(i) Targeting cutting-edge research toward solving pressing societal problems;

(ii) Promoting economic development by raising the level of education and specialization

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among the population; and

(iii) Creating jobs through development of new products and services.

(2) The Council for Community and Technical College Education and the Higher Education Policy Commission. -- In their role as state-level coordinating boards, the council and commission function as important partners with state policy leaders in providing higher education that meets state needs. The council and commission provide service to the state in the following ways:

(A) By developing a public policy agenda for various aspects of higher education that is aligned with state goals and objectives and the role and responsibilities of each coordinating board;

(B) By ensuring that institutional missions and goals are aligned with relevant parts of the public policy agenda and that institutions maximize the resources available to them to fulfill their missions and make reasonable progress toward meeting established state goals;

(C) By evaluating and reporting on progress in implementing the public policy agenda;

(D) By promoting system efficiencies through collaboration and cooperation across institutions and through focusing institutional missions as appropriate; and

(E) By conducting research, collecting data and providing objective recommendations to aid elected state officials in making policy decisions.

(3) State of West Virginia. -- Elected state officials represent the citizens of West Virginia and are critical partners in providing quality higher education. In this context, these state-level policymakers serve the state in the following ways:

(A) By establishing goals, objectives and priorities for higher education based on a thoughtful, systematic determination of state needs;

(B) By providing resources necessary to address state goals, objectives and priorities for higher education; and

(C) By providing incentives for and removing barriers to the achievement of state goals, objectives and priorities.

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