



NEW CHALLENGES, NEW DIRECTIONS TASK FORCE

APRIL 22, 2009

Meeting Summary

Present: David Flanagan, Marjorie Medd, Ronald Mosley, Bertram Jacobs, Sandra Featherman, Charles Weiss, James Bradley, Valerie Seaberg, Norm Fournier, Allyson Hughes Handley, Rebecca Wyke, Michelle Hood

- Chair Flanagan began the meeting by announcing that Robert Zemsky and Tom Layzell, two higher education experts suggested by members of the task force are here today to meet with the task force.
- Michael Owen, an undergraduate student from Orono, was given a moment to share his thoughts with the task force since he missed the public input sessions. Owen suggested rethinking the maintenance of seven separate universities. Chair Flanagan thanked Owen for giving his views, and said they would be taken into account as the task force continues its deliberations.
- Chair Flanagan then asked Sandra Featherman to introduce Zemsky, she said he was a distinguished professor at the University of Pennsylvania who has done work on higher education issues for a long time.
 - Zemsky started his presentation by describing the different types of systems and how they evolve, changing and responding to economic challenges. He said if universities are concerned about affordability and don't want to balance the budget on the backs of the staff, they've got to change the production functions. Zemsky said the issues universities face were well-defined by Thomas Friedman's book "The World is Flat." What Friedman described in that book was a flat, highly connected world where traditional intermediaries are not as needed, since people can find information from the source. Zemsky said universities are first and foremost intermediaries and have to rethink what they do in a world of connectivity and one in which large companies are moving away from a hub-and-spoke approach to a networked approach.
 - Zemsky said higher education will become a network enterprise, and used the University of Phoenix online as an example of what that structural model will look like. In such a model, there is a high level of interchangeability. If a student moves from one physical location to another, they lose no credits and no time toward degree. Zemsky said students are increasingly looking for that kind of experience,

and if public universities don't provide it, students will look to the for-profits to provide it. He said networks do not necessarily mean online, but interchangeable with the ability to mix and match that a network provides. A networked University of Maine System would increase the amount of interconnectivity and compatibility between the institutions, and look for ways to fit the community colleges into this process. He said the American higher education is in pedagogical gridlock and caught in a cycle of funding interesting experiments that eventually fade away and have no impact on how universities go about delivering education. Zemsky said universities have to think about how they can make changes on a much larger scale, and gave three-year baccalaureate degrees as an example of the type of change he has in mind. Such changes would make the university change everything it does, and re-invent the assessment metrics to measure those things.

- A member of the task force asked how network schools would preserve consistent standards on hiring faculty. Zemsky said putting quality controls in place, monitored by constant evaluation through audits, would help ensure quality. Another task force member asked about funding co-curricular and cultural activities. Zemsky said universities have to break out the cost of things like art museums from educational activities. That would help point out to the State that if it wants things like art museums, research and public service, they're going to have to pay for them instead of relying on students to subsidize public goods. Modern university budgets have a lot of cost subsidy built into them, with universities increasingly paying for things the market won't pay for and the state doesn't want to pay for so tuition keeps inching up to maintain financial stability. Asking the state to fund certain activities and students to fund others instead of bundling the budget would assist in breaking that cycle. Co-curricular activities that the market will pay for should be offered at a fair price.
- The next question dealt with quality of education provided by online or networked universities. Zemsky said we shouldn't look at the pedagogical model of University of Phoenix online, but the structural model and that faculty should still retain control of what constitutes a quality higher education, and create metrics to measure their own progress at providing it. There followed a short discussion of how the university system could start providing three-year degrees. Zemsky said a major issue is that universities do not allow, for the most part, credit by examination and we ought to, since our current system of providing AP credits out of high school doesn't seem to shorten time at university.
- The final question was that of interchangeability and quality standardization and why some universities in a system don't accept credits for courses offered at other institutions in that system. Zemsky said he doesn't understand why higher education has not solved that problem out of pure political necessity, since it's an issue that consistently arises with state legislators. Certain subject areas, such as

calculus and foreign languages, are highly interchangeable and should be treated as such in a system.

- Chair Flanagan thanked Zemsky for his time and willingness to speak to the task force, then asked President Allyson Hughes Handley to introduce Tom Layzell, former head of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.
 - Layzell began by saying American higher education's major policy challenge is to increase the educational attainment of its citizens. The changing economy will put increased demands on higher education to provide workers, and Layzell said if increasing attainment is not on the agenda, it will be. He talked about President Obama's goal of being number one in degree attainment by 2020, and asked whether Maine can reach that benchmark. Layzell said the demographic and financial situation will present a significant challenge to achieving the goal, but restructuring presents great opportunities.
 - Layzell said the first goal should be to gather as much data as the university can on state and regional needs, then mount an attempt to create a public agenda. That process begins with a comprehensive attempt to solicit from the citizens of the state what it is the state needs from its educational institution; need to just go out and ask people what they need and develop a long-term goal to meet those needs. Layzell said the university system should produce statements of aspiration – where you want to be, then assign each institution annual goals as a way to measure performance and assure accountability. In addition, the university system needs to view education as one system and work closely with K-12 and community colleges to meet the needs of the state's students. There is a mutual responsibility to see that young people stay in high school and come into higher education prepared for college work.
 - On the board level, Layzell said the system has to better align board meeting agendas with the public agenda goals, and get as much routine business off the board agendas as possible to achieve that. Layzell said in Kentucky, the board aligned its agenda around the "Five Questions:"
 - Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?
 - Is Kentucky postsecondary education affordable to its citizens?
 - Do more Kentuckians have certificates and degrees?
 - Are college graduates prepared for life and work in Kentucky?
 - Are Kentucky's people, communities and economy benefitting?
 - Layzell said any restructuring done has to make sense in terms of the long-term goals of the public agenda and a successful system needs a strong board, a strong chancellor and strong presidents working under an overarching policy framework. That framework will act as an anchor and resource allocations ought to be aimed at meeting the public goal.

- Layzell was asked about restructuring and the role of system services. He said the system should consider the possibility of creating a separate not-for-profit corporation that could include chancellor, presidents or CFOs as a steering committee with a separate budget. This entity would report to the board. The next question dealt with the state role in ensuring educational success and how the state and the system can come to consensus on what level of funding is appropriate. Layzell said in Kentucky, there was consensus, but that didn't lead to more money. When dealing with the legislature and state government, Layzell said it is important to create good partnerships and strong advocates. In Kentucky, an inter-alumni council was created and it became an important advocacy network for the system. He said it's also important to get buy-in from the university community as well.
- Layzell was asked based on his experience working with legislators, where would it make the most sense for the system office to be located? Layzell said he's never known it to be anywhere but the city where the state capital is located. The next question was whether there was really an agreement of what higher education was all about. Layzell said people understand the importance of higher education, but universities can and should do a better job of teaching people about its role in economic success and job creation. The board should be the one who keeps the institutions focused on the overarching public agenda and continuing the conversation about it. Layzell was asked about the chancellor's office responsibilities in Kentucky. He said running presidential searches, evaluating presidents, strategic planning, advocacy on behalf of system, some labor relations. The size of the office was 90+ workers, which included the library and virtual campus as well as the state economist and demographer.
- Chair Flanagan thanked Layzell for his time and presentation. In other business, Chair Flanagan said he had received a letter from John Mahon, dean of the business school at Orono. In that letter, Mahon spoke on behalf of deans from a number of disciplines in Orono and Portland and asked to meet with the task force. There was some discussion of who and whether additional groups should be invited to speak with the task force and what the protocol is for responding to such requests. The task force decided it would be appropriate for that group to meet with the subcommittee on missions and the provosts working in Arena Two.
- Chair Flanagan then raised the issue of consultants and the need to make a decision on which one to contract. The task force discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each consultant group and decided to go with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Chair Flanagan then asked each of the committees to come up with three conceptual alternatives for recommendations in their area of work going forward.
- Chair Flanagan adjourned the meeting.