

D. *Other Matters*

1. **Board Goal – Receive Proposal to Attract Kansans with some College Credit, but No Degree, Back to Higher Education to Complete a Credential** **Jean Redeker, VP, Academic Affairs**

Summary

Board Goal One for 2016-17, adopted at the August 2016 Board retreat, states “The Board will receive a proposal to attract Kansans with some college credit, but no degree, back to higher education to complete a credential, as well as the projected costs to implement the proposal.” This paper describes two proposals and provides cost options for consideration.

Background

In August of 2016 the Kansas Board of Regents established a goal of identifying the best strategies to attract adults with some college but no degree or certificate to help promote its larger expectation that 60 percent of Kansans will have earned a valid postsecondary credential by the year 2020. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center data, more than 300,000 Kansans have earned some college credit but no degree including 37,704 “potential completers” who have two or more years’ worth of progress.

A recent study of adults who were considering returning to postsecondary education found that many of them had poor information about the factors to consider when selecting a program and institution, that many also lacked information on the benefits of degree completion, and that most of these prospective students “are greatly worried about the costs of college and their ability to balance school with the demands of work and family” (*Is College Worth it for Me: How Adults Without Degrees Think About Going (Back) to School*, A Report by Public Agenda, 2013).

In December of 2016 the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) released a document entitled, *Adult Promise Program: A Pilot Design Template for States*, to guide states through the implementation of a pilot program designed to attract adult students. According to SHEEO, adult students typically have more financial obligations than traditional students and addressing those obstacles is a key strategy in adult degree completion programs. In addition, support services such as mentoring, Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit awards, degree maps, structured schedules, year-round enrollment, and alternative instructional delivery such as weekend and online courses, are critical.

Several states have launched returning adult student initiatives in recent years. These initiatives were launched and backed by either the state’s Governor or Legislature, and typically supported with millions of dollars in state funding and by private foundation support. Financial aid at the state level is one key resource for returning students and were a component of most of these initiatives.

Among the more notable statewide strategies are the Georgia Go Back/Get Ahead, the Indiana You Can Go Back (\$7.5M in state grants), and the Tennessee Reconnect + Complete initiatives. Georgia, for example, had 101,118 potential completers and spent \$6 million between 2014 and 2016 on its initiative, which generated 6,200 inquiries (6%) and more than 500 adults (0.5%) who applied and enrolled in a program during that time. All of the statewide strategies provide essential information for returning adults, links to other resources, and personal coaches or contacts to assist with the admissions, financial aid, and enrollment processes.

Closer to home the KC Degrees initiative was launched in September of 2016 and seeks to reconnect adults who have not earned a certificate or degree in the six-county metropolitan area with one of the 17 participating institutions. The project is funded by the Lumina Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation, and several of the partner institutions. It provides numerous resources to returning students including one-on-one college success navigators and 200 annual \$5,000 scholarships for up to five years for both part-time and full-time study.

Two proposals are listed below for consideration. The “Get *AHEAD*” proposal focuses on primarily on student scholarships, while *Finish What You Started* is an alternative low-cost promotional campaign to encourage adults to complete an existing online degree program.

The Get *AHEAD* in Kansas Proposal

The proposed \$2.0M Get *AHEAD* (Adult Higher Education Accessible Degrees) initiative would assist 1,500 adult Kansans to complete an online baccalaureate degree and another 500 students to complete an associate degree. The Get *AHEAD* programs would be aligned with state economic needs and would provide scholarships similar to those proposed by Board staff in 2013 for returning adult students as well as information about reverse transfer options. The 2,000 adult student target population represents about five percent of the Kansas “potential completers” noted in the National Student Clearinghouse data. SHEEO estimated the average annual tuition cost of an adult promise pilot program for 1,000 Pell-eligible students in the two-year sector to be \$350,000.

Three-fourths of the Get *AHEAD* project funds would be allocated for returning adult tuition scholarships. The proposed budget shown in the table below would also provide a project director and a program advisor along with a marketing campaign and the creation of a corps of volunteer adult student mentors. Based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the increases in median weekly earnings associated with bachelor and associate degrees could increase the collective annual earnings of the Get *AHEAD* target population by \$32,682,000.

Proposed Get *AHEAD* Budget

Year 1 Budget	Year 2 Budget	Year 3 Budget	Budget Item
\$250,000	\$750,000	\$500,000	Returning Adult Student (RAS) Scholarships
\$125,000	\$75,000		Marketing Campaign and Website
\$40,000	\$10,000		Adult Student Mentor Recruitment and Training
\$50,000	\$50,000		Project Director (.5 FTE) Salary and Benefits
\$75,000	\$75,000		Program Advisor (1.0 FTE) Salary and Benefits
\$540,000	\$960,000	\$500,000	Total

The *Finish What You Started* Proposal

The *Finish What You Started* proposal was developed initially by a subcommittee of the Continuing Education Deans Advisory Council as an alternative low-cost promotional campaign to encourage adults to complete an existing online degree program. The proposal was refined by Board staff and envisions a new website where returning adult students could easily learn about all of the online associate and baccalaureate degree programs currently offered throughout the system. The participating institutions would promote and deliver online associate and bachelor degrees in areas designed to prepare a highly skilled workforce. Institutional participation would be voluntary and the institutions would identify which of their respective online programs should be featured as a part of the initiative.

Because of its statewide mission as the land grant university that includes an extension office in all 105 counties, the Kansas State University Global Campus has offered to coordinate the *Finish What You Started* initiative. It would also be promoted by the participating institutions, the Board, and higher education consortia such as EDUKAN. The initiative would be funded by in-kind contributions and a nominal annual fee of \$1,000 from each of the participating institutions. The *Finish What You Started* proposal would likely result in fewer adults completing an associate or baccalaureate degree than the Get *AHEAD* proposal, but it would increase awareness among the target population of the programs that already exist and how they could access the programs from anywhere in the state.

Recommendation

Since financial aid at the state level is a key resource for returning adult students, staff recommends seeking \$2.0M in state funding over three years to support the Get *AHEAD* initiative.