Women and Higher Education in Utah: 
Recommendations for the Board of Regents

To: Regents Jordan and Beesley; Commissioner Sederburg
Date: March 11, 2011
From: Susan R. Madsen and Cheryl Hanewicz

Introduction
The two-year Utah Women and Education Project (UWEP) is coming to a close (May 2009-May 2011). We have completed extensive research within the state that can help guide some recommendations for the Utah System of Higher Education, Board of Regents, the Utah State Office of Education, colleges and universities, and many other entities and individuals. We were asked at our last meeting (February 4, 2011) to offer some suggestions for policy based on our research results for the Board of Regents.

HigherEdUtah2010
Related Strategic Priorities
• Increase the rate of student participation.
• Increase the rate of student completion.

Related Action Plan Items
• Expand the pipeline of college/reaceer0ready and college-inclined high school graduates.
• Stop leakages in the higher education pipeline by increasing the number who persist and complete their education once they enter college.

Recommendations
1. Leadership: Find a way to continue the focus on women in higher education so the emphasis does not decrease (there is concern).

2. Certificate and degree programs
   a. Add carefully designed one-year certificate programs that will lead directly to associates degrees.
   b. Create additional AAS programs where certificates, non-credit courses, etc. can be used as basis for gaining credit.
   c. In additional to 2+2 programs, create 3+1 programs in other disciplines [19,32]
   d. Encourage colleges to include experiential credit for majors that could work with nontraditional students (e.g., social work, education) [23].
   e. Have colleges and universities to keep associate programs so that women can have some level of a degree.

3. Marketing/PR
   a. Develop videos about college in Utah for high school students (including nuggets of information about things like how students can continue after marriage).
   b. Develop a computer program about college for young people of various ages to help them learn about college; this could include exploring options for college (can log in without an ID) where they could explore hypothetical majors/career options online and what specific classes they would take in college.
c. Discuss and present the broad benefits of postsecondary education (including benefits to parenting, how education prepares you for service and life, and the importance of attending directly from high school).

d. Create materials that can be used in the schools that briefly explain why general education is so important.

e. Create materials that will help increase awareness of women in Utah to options to return to school (e.g., child care, majors, financial aid, one class at a time, flexible learning options).

f. Produce materials that help parents and other people of influence understand their own educational choices and actions influence their children (see Research Snapshots for details).

g. Assist institutions in creating a united marketing package that helps increase awareness of nontraditional fields for women in Utah (e.g., business, IT); highlight (in the media) women who are doing well in this areas and discuss how they also use their education in other ways.

h. Collaborate with film programs to get student groups (e.g., service-learning) to assist in segments (possibly bring together a team/committee) of professors from these areas.

i. Create reality documents (e.g., divorce rate, poverty) to convince women to get their degrees and their parents to support (e.g., investing in their children’s education).

4. Institutional resources

a. Enhance support to expand childcare facilities, and design creative solutions for funding shortfalls (e.g., parents help staff).

b. Design concurrent enrollment as a bridge programs for students to experience higher education while in high school rather than being an easy way to obtain credits for students.

c. Provide extra support/resources (e.g., scholarships) for women who enter the high growth, non-traditional fields [33, 49].

d. Continue to strengthen First Year Experience programs (let them know about clubs and organizations that are available for them to join); information about the broad value of a college education should be integrated into all programs.

e. Encourage institutions to create and support adult bridge programs for non-traditional students.

f. Support programs on college campuses that focus on working with middle and high schools.

g. Create a basic structure or work with the GEAR UP or other programs to put together basic presentations/materials. Use service-learning courses in public speaking, marketing, public relations, community engagement to send more people into the schools to speak to classes and meet with students one-on-one.

h. Encourage institutions to assess efforts.

5. Collaboration with K-12

a. Encourage concurrent enrollment in courses that will meet specific college general education requirements.
b. Support and encourage colleges/universities to expand programs that send employees into the schools and have students visit campuses.

c. Offer workshops for K-12 (e.g., counselors, administrators) on how to draft short documents to get funds from businesses to support campus visits and other programs.

d. Assist colleges and schools in developing programs to bring younger students onto campuses (middle-school) and continue programs for high school students (not just seniors).

e. Work with USOE to encourage the development of programs or other resources that introduce high school students to future employment opportunities (e.g., videos, speakers, interactive computer programs).

f. Develop a plan to discuss “integration” with girls, young women, and potential returning women; they can fulfill multiple roles.

g. Prepare simple materials that can be distributed to parents (e.g., PTA) of young children; these could include ideas to help guide parent-child conversations at young ages (e.g., start saving money, visits to college campuses, and discussions about college choices). These could be guidebooks that include information on the value of higher education; efforts should be made to distribute these to the homes of underserved populations in English and Spanish.

h. Major and career exploration should be a standard component of the high school curriculum. Utah Futures should be leveraged to share career readiness information with as many students as possible and at the earliest opportunity in their education (7th grade).

i. Support programs that reach out to middle and high school students (e.g., Utah Council Consortium) and encourage them to include information from our findings (e.g., value of higher education, college preparation activities). Information must be communicated assertively before the senior year of high school.

j. Get messages to K-12 to integrate information in assignments about what college is for and the benefits.

k. At the time students take EXPLORE exam, create a process to include the support system analysis for each student to learn what is needed to get to college [8].

l. Establish programs that help young women explore many career options and understand that they have the capability to be successful in those areas (discussing part-time work options).

m. Add more service-learning opportunities for students in high schools.

n. Encourage student preparation in high school (see detailed results in our reports); this includes college preparation activities as well as serving in leadership positions, involvement in clubs, sports teams, volunteer work, etc.

o. Encourage students more strongly to take challenging courses in high school (e.g., senior year issues).

p. Create more leadership opportunities for K-12 students so each student has at least one chance to serve in a formal role during elementary and secondary school.

q. Help get messages to school counselors and teachers cautioning them not to put only certain student on the college track.

r. Help young women discover their strengths so they will have higher aspirations for higher education.
6. Finances
   a. Increase efforts to help the public understand the importance of children, youth, and parents saving money for college.
   b. Figure out ways to communicate options to young women and potential returning students.
   c. Suggest that businesses pay college costs for students and then students will work for them after graduation for a certain number of years like the Army [21].
   d. Use Flat Word Knowledge materials where appropriate to reduce the cost of student books [40].

7. Outside organizations/community
   a. Establish a resource “hub” or find a way to increase awareness of already established organizations (e.g., esingleparents.org) outside of higher education [15].
   b. Support mentoring programs (e.g., Women in Technology) that are already established and to assist young women preparing for college or in college [23].
   c. Have businesses partner with schools to help fund trips to college campuses and other related efforts.
   d. Continue conversations with religious leaders and encourage them to have local church leaders include college conversations in more church related meetings and activities. Share results to local church leaders so they know the powerful influence they can be on a young woman’s college decision.
   e. Harness business/community energy to become involved in assisting and supporting this work.

8. General
   a. Focus policy on populations that are historically least likely to pursue higher education in the state of Utah (e.g., women, first-generation, low income, minorities, academically underprepared).
   b. Discuss “completing” more than “attending” in all communication.
   c. Continue to bring together all community stakeholders to discuss and assist with this issue.

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