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Can P-16 Councils Help Promote the College Readiness and Success Agenda?

Lessons from Three Case Studies

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Purpose of Project

- National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education - state policy options to improve college readiness/success

The Governance Divide (2005)

Deep divisions between K-12 and postsecondary education that account for much of inadequate educational attainment

Claiming Common Ground (2006)

Identified four policy levers state can use to bridge governance gap between K-12 and postsecondary: alignment, finance, data systems, accountability

- Next stage: can P-16 Councils be an effective vehicle to advance this agenda?
 - Survey and **case studies**
 - Drafts available: <http://www.csus.edu/ihe>

Expectations (Hopes) - Based on Earlier Research

Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ For college readiness that reflect postsecondary input
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Aligned to readiness standards
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Aligned to readiness standards
Policy infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To support alignment agenda<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ resources to provide incentive to collaborate▪ accountability for transitions – not just institutional▪ data systems to support P-16

Questions:

- Are these elements present – or in the works?
- Is P-16 Council an effective player?

Comparison of Three State Councils

	Kentucky	Rhode Island	Arizona
Year formed	1999	2005	2005
Basis in law	None	Executive Order	Executive Order
Lead role	Higher Ed	Governor	Business/Gov
# Members	18	9	40
Legislature role	None (neutral)	None (hostile)	Members
Governor's role	None	Chair (active)	Co-Chair
Funding/staff	None - CPE	None - Gov	Yes - major
Structure	State/Regional	Gov "cabinet"	8 committees
Public account.	Yes - somewhat	No	Yes - major

Kentucky

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Low SES – huge need to raise education levels▪ Integrate disparate prior reforms
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Voluntary cooperation among state agencies▪ Regional councils (uneven participation)
Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Align curriculum▪ Raise teacher quality▪ Increase college going
Value Added	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enhances communication▪ Influences agency agendas▪ Influences local alignment activity
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lack of authority – no reporting mandate▪ Insufficient participation by Legislature and Governor▪ Lack of strong leadership▪ Lack of state-regional coordination around policy
Key Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Likely trade-off between longevity and influence

Rhode Island

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Traditionally high performing state▪ Newly diversifying population▪ New Governor focused on economic development
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Limited to executive agencies, i.e., “cabinet”▪ No public access or accountability
Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Align standards – reduce remediation▪ Link achievement standards with employer expectations▪ Educated workforce for information economy – STEM▪ Improve math and science teaching
Value Added	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gets state agencies on same page with “big picture”▪ Raises profile of key issues▪ More efficient management of state agenda
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No Legislative buy-in to Council or its agenda▪ Legislative/Executive power struggle▪ Lack of broad-based involvement
Key Lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ P-16 collaboration depends on political relationships▪ <i>Policy</i> is essential tool in reform (lacking here)

Arizona

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Huge demographic challenges – growth and diversity▪ Low college going culture▪ Inadequate postsecondary infrastructure▪ Fiscally conservative state
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Highly structured – staff, resources, time▪ Broad public involvement and accountability
Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Public information – importance of education agenda▪ Increase college going and degree production▪ Increase alignment and rigor
Value Added	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Raises public expectations – and pressure▪ Fosters common agendas among participating units▪ Increases effectiveness of each unit (weight of Council)
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Too many priorities▪ Inadequate public support for huge task at hand
Key Lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ External stakeholders - vital force in policy change▪ “Connecting the dots” requires structure and staff

Substantive Accomplishments and Challenges

- Alignment
 - Progress in rigorous high school standards
 - Less progress in alignment across sectors and affect on curriculum
 - All states working with Achieve (ADP)
- Assessment
 - Major struggles – substantive and political
 - Lack of understanding of best uses of different types of instruments: national norms, state standards, end of course
- Others (examples...)
 - Dual enrollment
 - Teacher quality
 - Data quality and data sharing improvements
- Falling short of a coordinated policy agenda

The Governance Conundrum for *Policy Reform*:
To override, eliminate, or bridge the divide?

- No one wants to create a “super agency” with powers over existing institutions
- No one wants to replace K-12 and postsecondary governance structures with a new K-16 entity
- But how does an advisory entity with no authority (P-16 Council) promote, implement, and sustain policy change?

Theories of Policy Change (Implicit) in the Absence of Authority

Kentucky	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Voluntary forum creates whole greater than the parts▪ Each agency can advocate for a better, coordinated agenda▪ The “real work” will occur in regional councils – where policy change will be driven by bottom/up and top/down
Rhode Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Stronger management will lead to more coordinated policy implementation▪ Important changes can occur within constraints of current policies
Arizona	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Expanded conversation with external stakeholders will put pressure on change resistance bureaucracies▪ Public accountability increases expectations for action▪ Leadership from Governor can sustain a complex policy change agenda and give it cohesion as the Council’s agenda

Lack of Authority Leads to Sustainability Questions

- Governor's leadership cuts both ways
 - More clout and legitimacy but less sustainable
 - Rhode Island – “too political to survive” in current form
 - Arizona – can strong external support overcome change in Governor and party?
 - Kentucky – sustainable but not influential
- Some models being considered
 - Executive order (but links it to an individual)
 - Statute (how much authority? as advisory body?)
 - Outside of government (to bypass need for legislative support – but what authority?)

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- Value added: hard to document – but widely claimed
 - Talking, bridging silos – surely a benefit
- Conditions to be effective *policy reform agent*
 - Mandate to provide advice to someone in position of authority
 - Legislative buy-in, if not membership
 - External support – especially from business
 - Capacity to coordinate an agenda – leadership, staff, and resources
 - **Expectation to promote a collective agenda and advocate for it as a council – rather than as separate entities**