

Date: December 8, 2010
Subject: Overview of “Complete to Compete”

In July 2010, Governor Gregoire formed a [Higher Education Funding Task Force](#) to focus on identifying a more sustainable funding model for higher education, as well as recommend ways to increase educational attainment and institutional accountability. One recommendation the Task Force intends to make is that the state adopt the [Complete to Compete](#) initiative recently developed by the National Governors Association (NGA).

Complete to Compete outlines a plan to create a national set of performance metrics to enhance accountability and shape funding strategies across states. Under the leadership of incoming Chair, West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin III (who has since been replaced by Governor Gregoire after he was elected to the US Senate in November) the NGA convened a Work Group on Common College Completion Metrics to recommend common higher education measures that states should collect and report publicly. The goal is to improve college completion rates and overall productivity in a new era of fiscal constraints coupled with unprecedented demand for higher education.

Reliable, comparable data within the sector will be key to achieving these goals as NGA and others attempt to identify which policies and practices are tied to successful outcomes. The University of Washington looks forward to participating in this effort. Presented below are the key components of the initiative, which can be found in greater detail on the [Complete to Compete website](#).

Complete to Compete sets the following definitions:

Completion rate: The percentage of individuals who complete a certificate or degree (e.g., associate and bachelor’s).

Attainment rate: The percentage of a population that has obtained a certificate or degree.

Productivity: Awarding more certificates and degrees with the same resources, while maintaining quality.

Complete to Compete recommends the following metrics:

OUTCOME METRICS:

- **Degrees awarded:** annual number and percentage of certificates, associate’s degrees, and bachelor’s degrees awarded;
- **Graduation rates:** number and percentage of certificate- or degree-seeking students who graduate within normal program time (two years for associate’s degrees; four years for bachelor’s degrees) or extended time (three years for associate’s degrees; six years for bachelor’s degrees);
- **Transfer rates:** annual number and percentage of students who transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution; and
- **Time and credits to degree:** average length of time in years and average number of credits that graduating students took to earn a certificate, an associate’s degree, or a bachelor’s degree.

PROGRESS METRICS:

- **Enrollment in remedial education:** number and percentage of entering first-time undergraduate students who place into and enroll in remedial math, English, or both;
- **Success beyond remedial education:** number and percentage of first-time undergraduate students who complete a remedial education course in math, English or both and complete a college-level course in the same subject;

- **Success in first-year college courses:** annual number and percentage of entering first-time undergraduate students who complete entry college-level math and English courses within the first two consecutive academic years;
- **Credit accumulation:** number and percentage of first-time undergraduate students completing 24 credit hours (for full-time students) or 12 credit hours (for part-time students) within their first academic year;
- **Retention rates:** number and percentage of entering undergraduate students who enroll consecutively from fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall at an institution of higher education; and
- **Course completion:** percentage of credit hours completed out of those attempted during an academic year.

In order to track whether access to higher education is not sacrificed in the name of completion, NGA also recommends tracking the following 'context' metrics:

CONTEXT METRICS:

- **Enrollment:** total first-time undergraduate students enrolled in an institution of higher education;
- **Completion ratio:** annual ratio of certificates and degrees awarded per 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate students; and
- **Market penetration:** annual ratio of certificates and degrees awarded relative to the state's population with a high school diploma.

The following data system requirements are necessary for implementation of annual reporting of the above metrics:

- A unique statewide student identifier;
- Student-level data for all public colleges and universities on: enrollment, demographics, financial aid, transfer, persistence, course/transcript, remediation, degree completion, and graduation;
- Privacy protection for all individually identifiable student records; and
- A data audit system to assess data quality, validity, and reliability.

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