Comments and Suggestions in Response to Group #3 Proposal

Submitted by Paul G. Pinsky

The state clearly needs to create a more robust and dynamic Career and Technology Education program. This program must be more dynamic and better coordinate efforts across the state. How should this be done and at what cost? Should resources be diverted for this purpose? Is new infrastructure required? All are important questions.

Sub-committee #3 has proposed a massive new initiative -- and new spending – to oversee one of four strands in our high schools that will encompass some percentage of the roughly 65% of our high school graduates who are projected to achieve college and career readiness (CCR) by 10th grade. As one of four strands (along with: Early College; AP & IB diplomas; those pursuing a mix of high school courses; and CTE), if divided equally, it may amount to a fourth of the 65% of students projected in this path, or 16 % of high school graduates.

At the same time, it is projected that 20% of high school students will not be college or career ready (CCR) upon completing high school. Group #3 further projects, incorrectly, I believe, that another 5% will stay beyond four years to achieve CCR. If this is inflated and the number is closer to 1%, than **those not achieving CCR rises to 24%.**

While future funding is not a zero sum game**, I would suggest that investing major expenditures to rebuild CTE (adding to new funding formula, paying staff for a new department, etc.) may be worth reconsidering, particularly when compared to the need of the 24% of our students who are projected to not meet CCR after four years.** I would suggest that some of the money proposed to underwrite costs associated with the creation of the CTE program (new addition to the funding formula, addition of new administrative staff for research, management, policy development working in new sub-cabinet, etc.) might be better used to assist these 24% of the student body to help improve their learning. This could occur through investments in tutoring, summer school or other programs appropriate to assist these students.

One of the four strands of students who actually achieve CCR by the end of 10th grade, the 'regular' students who will pursue 'high school courses and some IB or college courses', are barely mentioned, other than providing 'rigor' in instruction. If we assume a desire to ensure that non-CTE students who meet the CCR requirement also will require highly enriched pathways, we must be prepared to invest in the infrastructure and quality of these learning environments beyond what may already be offered by districts. Workgroup #3's recommendations provides limited reference to these needed investments and how such programs should be implemented statewide, district by district.

I would predict that this group who achieve CCR but are not committed to throw themselves fully into early college or CTE, including many students who haven't decided a life path at 16, may not know what they want to do. Ultimately, this group may actually make up the largest strand of the 65% who achieve CCR in a timely fashion.

None of us know how many students who have achieved CCR will pursue CTE. Could it possiblybe one in five of all high school students (20%) or maybe one in three of those achieving CCR, or 22%? If we total

the number of students not achieving CCR, 24%, along with those students who achieve CCR but remain 'regular' students and mix traditional classes with a few advanced classes (AP, IB or community college classes), possibly one in three, together these two categories total 46% of all high school students who receive no additional support in their last two years of high school.

The subcommittee's focus – and projected spending -- on the 16-20% CTE strand students compared to the 46% either not achieving CCR or not choosing a defined strand may need some reconsideration.

And finally, this expansive program also calls for an entity with expanded legal authority, including regulatory power and the authority to review budgets of multiple government agencies. It seems to stand over aspects of the community college program as well as units of the state department of education. In fact, it proposes that a *sub-committee* of the *sub-cabinet* be given regulatory authority.

When the state adopted a policy to strive to have 55% of our population attain at least a two-year degree, we did not create a new education structure or organization. Currently, there is serious debate, but not yet agreement, as to whether the Kirwan Commission, itself, should create an independent body to oversee a multi-billion dollar school investment, if just for a limited period of time

Is the proposed supra-body one the commission wants to create at this time? Are there other structures which would work? The commission should consider whether a separate and distinct accountability sub-cabinet -- for this singular cohort of students -- may result in bureaucratic overlap that ultimately serves to hamper rather than promote the noble concept initially envisioned.

While there will be a need to engage non-traditional education stakeholders (i.e. industry partners and DLLR officials) for CTE-specific policy development and implementation, this work should be viewed within a broader effort towards accountability for the entirety of the Commission's report, not as a stand-alone entity.

Specifically, I would ask the commission to consider:

1. Whether costs associated with this initiative, including a special category in the funding formula and other associated expenditures can be reduced with the intent of shifting money to programs to assist high school students who do not achieve CCR upon completing four years of high school or to those not achieving CCR by the end of 10th grade.
2. If the CTE aspect of the proposal is too massive and outsized, given the unknown number of students who will achieve CCR and pursue the CTE strand?
3. Other structures with more limited authority and cost to oversee and/or coordinate the various CTE silos across the P-20 spectrum?

The policy and projection of students who would stay beyond four years (and up to age 21) is misguided. For many reasons, it will not be utilized by the number projected and it could potentially be fraught with other unintended consequences.

Specifically, I propose:

4. Changing this proposal to limit continued enrollment to a period to include the summer after graduation or, at the latest, one additional year. Additionally, I would reduce the projected number to 1% and raise the number of those not achieving CCR to 24%.