

Public Hearing on the Statewide Plan for Education 2012-2020

Public Hearing #2, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, Center for Tomorrow,
December 3, 2012

Testimony provided by Jeffrey P. Tredo, Director of New York State Campuses on behalf of Bryant &
Stratton College and the Association of Proprietary Colleges

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Introduction

Good morning, my name is Jeff Tredo and I am the Director of New York State Campuses for Bryant & Stratton College. I would like to thank the State Education Department and the Board of Regents for the opportunity to provide comments on the Statewide Plan for Education for New York State. I am hopeful that this plan and these hearings mark the beginning of an ongoing dialog that will deepen and evolve over the course of the next eight years.

For those that may not be as familiar with Bryant & Stratton College, please allow me to take a moment to provide a brief overview. The College was founded in 1854 right here in Buffalo, New York, and for nearly 160 years we have provided education and training in career areas with high employment potential. The College is Regionally Accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. We operate a total of nineteen campuses across the country, with eight campuses located in New York State serving the geographic regions of Albany, Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo. Campuses in all four of those geographic regions provide students the opportunity to earn associate and baccalaureate degrees. Bryant & Stratton College enrolls a diverse student body. Our students represent a wide variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds and range in age from recent high school graduates to adult students who may be returning to complete a degree they once started, earn another credential or are seeking higher education for the first time. Currently, across our eight campuses in New York State, we serve

4500 students. The College has also been delivering online education to New York State residents since 1999 and currently offers 15 complete degree programs through that modality.

Bryant & Stratton College is also one of the founding members of the Association of Proprietary Colleges and continues to be actively involved in that organization.

My goal here today is to offer commentary related to the Topics of Concern outlined in the State Wide Plan, and contribute to this important conversation that seeks to shape higher education in the state for the next eight years. The State's plan speaks to many quality initiatives that will serve to maintain the recognition of New York's Higher Education system as one of the finest in the nation. All of us here today have an incredible opportunity to advance student success and I am honored to share my thoughts on these critical topics. Throughout my comments this morning, I will present themes of collaboration, shared expertise, thoughtful interaction with the P-12 system and the importance of leveraging our understanding of both student and employer needs.

I would like to commend the department and the Regents on their long history of recognizing the value and necessity of all four sectors of higher education in the State; evidenced once again by the inclusion of plans from the Proprietary Colleges of New York.

Trends in Higher Education

The plan recognizes, in the trends in higher education section, that the number of High School graduates in New York State is expected to decline through 2019 and the potential impact of that on higher education institutions across the state. The advisory committee on student financial assistance provided testimony to the US Congress and the US Department of Education in February of this year and similarly noted the expected reallocation of resources and focus on the part of institutions toward serving a non-traditional student population.

The collaborative approach to delivering higher education outcomes through all four sectors of higher education established and supported by this state provides a solid foundation for institutions like Bryant & Stratton College, who have a record of success in servicing a non- traditional student population, to share our experiences, strategies and insights with our peers across the state.

Strengthen Connections Between the Higher Education and P-12 Education Functions of the University of the State of New York

The department's plan has rightly identified strengthening connections throughout the educational system in New York as a key topic of concern. Bryant & Stratton College operates campuses in the State's four largest upstate urban areas and understands and appreciates the need to continually improve the educational outcomes of students in the Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany school districts, as well as those in the districts surrounding these areas. The Regent's Reform Agenda establishes a solid framework for ensuring high school graduates are college and career ready. Successful implementation of this framework requires the participation, collective expertise and collaboration of all four sectors of higher education in the state.

The plan includes many quality initiatives being implemented by the state's higher education institutions to partner with local school districts to help improve the preparedness of quality teachers and the career and college readiness of high school graduates.

As noted in SUNY's response to this topic of concern, 40 percent of the state's high school graduates are unprepared or under prepared for college-level work. This alarming statistic not only underscores the need to successfully implement the Regents reform agenda but also informs the conversation surrounding access to, and the cost of, higher education in the state. Review of all four sectors' responses to this topic of concern reveals several parallel initiatives that have been put in place to

provide high school students the opportunity to begin to understand and experience a college level coursework.

Initiatives such as the Smart Scholars Early College High School program, my own institution's Middle College program being piloted in the Rochester area and the opportunity for High School students to take tuition free college courses while simultaneously earning their High School degree all speak to the desire of higher education institutions in the state to help better prepare students for college level rigor. These initiatives not only provide students the opportunity to stick the proverbial "toe in the water" of higher education, but also serve to improve access and lower the expense and time it takes to complete a program of study at the collegiate level.

Silent in each sectors' response regarding these initiatives is the experience and insight gained by the institutions who operate these programs. Hidden within the description of these programs and of benefit to the student is the fact they that also provide the institutions of higher education a first-hand glimpse into the motivators, learning styles and lives of today's high school student and tomorrow's college student. Over the past four years, Bryant & Stratton College has had between three and four hundred high school juniors and seniors take the opportunity to earn college credit through tuition free course offerings at our campuses across the state. Undoubtedly, this experience affords the College the opportunity to give students exposure to the College with the hope that they might consider Bryant & Stratton as one of their college choices, but even more valuable is the experience the college gains in understanding the learning needs of these students. Whether it be a suburban high school student's need for flexibility to accommodate a schedule packed with academic, extra- curricular and social demands or an urban student's need for support to help balance socio-economic pressures, this experience has deepened Bryant & Stratton's understanding of the next generation of College students. This experience has led to pilot initiatives that provide students the chance to earn college credit

through Online and Blended learning opportunities right down to understanding the best times and days of the week to offer courses in a way that helps to improve student attendance and success in the class.

Opportunities abound for creating more forums for institutions to engage in meaningful dialog to share our experiences and hone our delivery of these experiences to students. The department stands in a unique position to help create and support the establishment of such forums. Collaboration between institutions allows for the sharing of expertise and will build efficacy into the initiatives and provide a basis for development of a more systemic approach to meeting the need of improving college readiness through the various programs across the higher education spectrum.

The Western New York Consortium of Colleges and Universities has begun such dialog among its 26 member institutions and the P-12 community within the greater Western New York area. The group's P-16 initiative has embarked upon the creation of plans to identify opportunities to improve teacher training programs in the area, foment partnerships between districts and institutions of higher education and encourage open dialog to identify any gaps between the Common Core Standards and College Readiness aimed at discovering ways to address any identified gaps. Bryant & Stratton College was asked to participate in this important dialogue and has chosen to become deeply involved in the Common Core to College Readiness work team. The conversation, started in 2011, acknowledges the varied and necessary differences in WNY college and university entrance requirements. However, participants of the committee are committed to investigating and communicating the differences in entrance requirements and determining the gaps that might exist between the common core "exit requirements" for high school graduates and the entrance expectations for our college and universities.

Bryant & Stratton College would welcome the opportunity to partner with our peer institutions and P-12 districts across the state to work on similar initiatives and encourages the department to consider how

implementation of its state wide plan for education can help create such opportunities and become a vehicle for the dissemination of best practices and lessons learned for such collaborative efforts across the state. We can accomplish far more by working together than by keeping this valuable intelligence siloed within our respective institutions.

Strengthen Connections of Higher Education with other Functions of The University of the State of New York

New York State's Education Department addresses the spectrum of educational needs through the various functions that exist within the department's structure. Many of New York's Higher Education institutions serve stakeholders throughout this same spectrum, necessitating fluid dialog and communication among the functions as a means to share expertise and build efficiency. As we discuss strengthening connections of higher education with other functions of the University of the State of New York, I think it is important to recognize that just like with P-12 functions, each of the sectors are already making strides in support of this topic of concern. In addition to identifying new opportunities, we must also encourage greater communication among the sectors to surface and share best practices so that we may extend or build upon the great work of our peers. With so many innovative and respected institutions throughout the state doing great things, powerful partnerships could be formed, but first we must better understand what each of us have to offer.

Proprietary Colleges have a long history of developing curriculum and programs to meet the needs of the employment communities we serve, as well as, providing access and support for non-traditional student learners, particularly the underserved and under-represented portions of this population. Specifically, many proprietary colleges have constructed a theory-based curriculum, highly scaffolded, to assure that deep learning, and application of the same, leads to career readiness while providing a solid foundation for future academic study. New York State provides non-traditional students who left high

school, before earning a high school diploma, the opportunity to simultaneously pursue a high school equivalency and college degree by applying 24 earned College credits toward their equivalency.

Unfortunately, changes to federal aid eligibility for these students has closed this door of opportunity for many students and left New York's various entities that serve these students searching for alternatives to meet the need.

As institutions refocus their resources and energies toward serving the non-traditional student population, it is imperative that dialog between Higher Education and the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services continues to occur. The collective expertise, infrastructure and resources of the state's higher education system must be brought to bear on servicing those in our communities that do not possess a high school diploma or its equivalency and who have very limited or no access to post-secondary education or the workforce.

For the past eight years, Bryant & Stratton College has been partnering with the Buffalo Public Schools Adult Education Division to offer the Pathways program to students seeking to improve their math and literacy skills. We are currently in conversation with providers of Online High School programs as a means of exploring additional pathways to College matriculation.

Strengthen Connections between Higher Education and Other Parts of the State's Social and Economic Structure

The strength of New York's economy is fueled by employers understanding that the state has a ready pool of qualified college graduates to help meet their labor needs. Again, I speak to the necessity of fostering a collaborative communication system that seeks to identify challenges in meeting the needs of employers and identifying ways to overcome those challenges.

Bryant & Stratton College is an institution whose curriculum and programs are designed with significant input from the employment community we serve, locally, state wide and nationally. This provides the opportunity to meet the needs of employers by ensuring that graduates are career ready. Recently, the department solicited input from the Higher Education community on ways it might improve its program approval process in the state. In response to the input received, the department identified, and the Regents approved, changes to this process. We commend the department for this change and are looking forward to the opportunity to use the new process to better meet the needs of the employment community. This new process will provide the Higher Education community a much better opportunity to respond swiftly to address labor shortages and program availability in an efficient manner.

Improve Access, Quality, and Performance of Higher Education

Access to education at all levels is, in my opinion, one of the hallmarks of the state's educational system. Ubiquitous to all elements of the educational system in New York is the basic principal of access for all that seek and need it.

Bryant & Stratton College serves three of the state's Big 5 urban schools districts. We are active participants in the Syracuse City School's Say Yes to Education program and have recently signed aboard with the Say Yes program started within the Buffalo Public Schools. We currently partner with seven high schools in the Rochester geographic area to provide a Middle College experience for students from those schools.

Our experience with these programs and these districts has driven home the importance of access to higher education. Whether it be through programs such as I just described or through a combination of online and blended learning opportunities, we encourage the department to continue to engage with the Higher Education community to strive to find new and creative ways in which to continue the state's

long tradition of providing higher education access to all of its residents interested in pursuing college level work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank the department and the Regents for providing the opportunity to offer commentary on the State Wide Plan for Education in New York State. We are looking forward to continuing the conversation over the course of the next eight years. New York's institutions of Higher Education have a substantial collective expertise and through continued collaboration have a significant opportunity to engage in thoughtful interaction with the state's P-12 system. Our daily experiences, technological advancements and analytics have all deepened our understanding of students' needs and preferences. At the same time, connections with the employment community, supported by a sensible regulatory infrastructure, puts us in a position to address labor shortages and evolve with business needs with better quality and efficiency than at any time in our history. Thank you for your time and attention this morning, I am happy to answer any questions you may have today. I have also placed my contact information at the end of this presentation should you questions at a future date.

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