

**Opening Comments in Conversation with Gene Wilhoit, Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers
at the Joint CCSSO/SHEEO Meeting, July 16, 2010**

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1) Why we are doing this?

- a) This is the fourth time I've been to a CCSSO summer meeting, and this time I'm delighted that more than 40 SHEEO members and other postsecondary education policy leaders are here with me. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that K-12 and postsecondary education depend on each other, but it takes real effort to work together. Gene Wilhoit has been a terrific colleague to me, and I'm grateful to him, Valerie Woodruff, the CCSSO staff, and the SHEEO staff for all they have done to make this happen.
- b) Shortly after I started this job 10 years ago I recall a new political appointee in the Department of Education saying to me, "K-12 has taken a lot of heat; soon it will be higher education's turn." That might have been intended as a warning, a threat, or a promise, but it seemed fair to me. I didn't start looking for a different job.

The issue for both K-12 and postsecondary education is not that we've gotten worse, but that the world has changed. The bar has been raised by global interdependence and global competition. What used to be good enough, is no longer good enough.

We now have to educate a much larger fraction of the population to a higher standard, without sacrificing world class excellence. For higher education the goal is: twice the degree attainment of the baby boom generation with no compromise on quality, in fact with higher quality. And we have to do it without boatloads of new money, maybe with less money.

- c) Primary and secondary education are the foundation for everything else – you know that and I know that. But every adult with responsibilities in K-12 education learned at least part of what they need to know at a college or university – Postsecondary education bears significant responsibility for equipping all educators for success.
- d) It is clear, however, that we cannot meet the educational needs of the 21st century without changing our confusing standards, administrative practices, and the teacher and school leader preparation programs of the 20th century.
- e) Both K-12 and postsecondary education have challenges to overcome – K-12 is struggling to balance standards and accountability with the flexibility, agility, and creativity needed to achieve higher levels of achievement for all students. Postsecondary education has plenty of flexibility and choice (we've counted on competition for accountability, and it doesn't work all that well), and we compete fiercely for excellence and prestige. But many of our postsecondary education traditions work against a commitment to widespread attainment and a disciplined strategy for achieving it.

f) The plain fact is we need each other; we can't succeed without each other. But let me describe our situation more positively. Working together we can achieve much more than we can working separately. Working together we can deliver everything the American people need from their educational system. This is the first time our organizations have met together on this scale, but it clearly isn't the first time these matters have been discussed. I think it is time for us to take collaboration between elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education to a new level. This meeting is to discuss what we need to do and how to get it done.

2) Common Core Standards.

- a) To get educational attainment at scale, clear learning goals are absolutely essential. Every learning goal doesn't need to be a standard, there should be room for different opinions about many things in education. But I think we have always had a workable consensus about mathematics and English, we've just not made it clear to students. CCSSO and NGA have done the country a great service by creating a state-led mechanism to development common core standards in these areas.
- b) The SHEEO Executive Committee endorsed the Common Core Standards initiative at our meeting last summer, unanimously and enthusiastically. It may be superfluous for me to say more, but I'll offer a couple of comments.
- i) Math and English knowledge and skill are the foundation for success in every subject – we have common standards here. Thanks for doing the hard work of making them explicit. To succeed in college and life, students also need to take the other subjects of the traditional college prep curriculum, building on that foundation.
 - ii) Common assessments for the Common Core Standards are necessary to make them meaningful. I'm pleased with the progress toward that objective, and grateful to Secretary Duncan for his leadership.
 - iii) To meet their purpose, the Common Core Standards need to be accepted and used by colleges and universities, and that means by their faculties. We'll need to involve them every step of the way, in every part of the process. No single organization can make that happen, but SHEEO will do all it can to help.
 - iv) Finally, we'll have to figure out how to deal with variable performance while we use the standards to help students achieve more. Everybody meeting standards will not be admitted to every institution or program, and some students falling short will and should be graduated from high school and admitted to college in order to keep learning.

3) Teacher and School Leader education and in-service professional development

- a) We have to dramatically improve the preparation and in-service professional development of teachers and school leaders. This is a really complex topic, and most everybody in government, K-12, and postsecondary education is good at pointing out what other people should do to make things better. Both K-12 and colleges and universities need to change.

We have good examples in practice of what a good system would look like, but we need to bring them to scale. We have tried a lot of band-aids, some of which are pretty good, but we need a systemic solution, not a work-around. I'll start out with what postsecondary education needs to do.

- i) Colleges and universities need more of the practical, in the trenches, wisdom of good teachers, principals, superintendents, and chief state school officers. That wisdom needs to be on the faculties of schools of education and incorporated into professional training, in the same general ways we have made education in business and medicine both clinical and analytical. A lot of the talent we need is working today in the K-12 system.
- ii) Arts and science faculty need to form stronger partnerships with educational school faculty to help practicing teachers master content at a higher level and become more skillful in improving student learning. We have good examples of such partnerships, but we've not brought them to scale. The Eisenhower professional development programs of the 1980s and 1990s and more recently Title II of the NCLB legislation have supported competitive grants programs administered by SHEEO agencies to form partnerships among arts and sciences faculty, education schools, and school districts. Many of these have been among the most focused, intensive, and successful professional development programs in the country. They exemplify partnerships between higher education and public schools. But they have been a small fraction of the professional development supported by the federal government. Such programs should be expanded.
- iii) Colleges and universities should reallocate more student time to practical, clinical experience, and they should reallocate more education school faculty time to the supervision of practice and the analysis of effective practice. This might extend into the first year of two of full-time professional work, as we do for medical residencies. School of Education faculty need to spend more time in schools.
- iv) Let me conclude with two things K-12 leaders can do to help make this happen:
 - (1) Examine the existing teacher certification laws to make sure they permit the reallocation of faculty and student time to well-supervised clinical experience. Sometimes existing laws make reform difficult or impossible.
 - (2) Be open to the hassle and inconvenience of incorporating more students and postsecondary education faculty into the schools. This will take effort by everybody involved, but it is the only thing that will work

4) Using information to improve performance: P-20 Data Systems

- a) A few years ago it became painfully clear that we didn't have good data on high school or college graduation rates in the United States. Most of our data systems collected data from schools and colleges, with no ability to track what happens to students who move from one school to another. A lot of students move around, so this is a big deal. Graduation rates are just part of the knowledge gap. It is hard to evaluate the effectiveness of all our educational policies and practices unless we know what happens to particular students.
- b) The only good, cost-effective solution to that problem is a longitudinal, student based data system. The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education organized by SHEEO recommended a national system for postsecondary education in 2005. This recommendation caused a lot of excitement in some quarters, and Congress passed a law prohibiting a federal system.
- c) We don't need a federal system, we don't even need a national system, but we do need educational data systems that can communicate with each other. With the help of the federal government (Congress clearly has many minds on this issue), many states have made real progress in developing longitudinal data systems to monitor student progress.
- d) It is critically important that these data systems help K-12 and postsecondary education communicate with each other. Every high school should be able to know how its students have fared in postsecondary education and the workplace. Every college and university should know how its graduates have performed in the workforce, especially if they are teaching in or leading an elementary or secondary school. And postsecondary and high school instructors should be communicating with each other to improve preparation and align expectations.
- e) Developing a system that will work for the entire country without being a centralized, federal system will take a fair bit of cooperation and coordination. With help from the Department of Education, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, CCSSO, SHEEO, and the Department of Education are developing a model set of common data standards that will meet the needs of elementary and secondary schools and postsecondary institutions. CCSSO and SHEEO are working together to be sure the standards meet the needs of the field and then to promote their widespread, voluntary adoption. By adopting the model standards, schools and colleges will be able to learn more about their own performance and effectively communicate about the students they have enrolled and graduated.
- f) The important words about this project description are: model, voluntary, and standards. We want to develop a model set of standards that are so attractive that everybody will want to adopt them as soon as possible. This is not the creation of a single, massive database.

- g) This is not a simple project. The needs and policy questions in K-12 and postsecondary education are not identical, and the system will have to serve the needs that over-lap as well as the particular needs of each sector. One of the biggest challenges will be to build a set of standards that is useful, meets the most important needs, and yet is not so complex that it collapses of its own weight. And it is critically important to make the privacy safeguards of our systems absolutely state of the art, while providing access to data to improve education.
- h) Despite these complex challenges, the goals are simple: Collaborative access to and use of high-quality data across all sectors, highly effective privacy safeguards for individual data, consistent definitions enabling more fluid data sharing, and improved analysis relevant to a variety of policy needs. CCSSO and SHEEO are committed to these goals and to the ongoing development and enhancement of state and national data systems.

5) Comments for introduction of Secretary Duncan

- a) Gene and I are sharing the honor of introducing Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. I'd like to begin our introduction by talking about the job he used to have. I worked for a private foundation in Chicago for 15 years, from 1985 to 2000, and I know something about Chicago public schools.
- b) Bill Bennett was Secretary of Education in those days, and on November 7, 1987, he called the Chicago public schools "the worst in the nation." Bennett went on to say it would take a "man or woman of steel" to clean up Chicago's school system, and encouraged parents to send their children to private schools.
- c) In 1988 Chicago launched a school reform agenda that has extended more than twenty years. In the early 1990's Secretary Duncan got directly involved in Chicago school reform. He was a key leader working under Paul Vallas in the 1990's and he succeeded Vallas as CEO from June 2001 until 2008. As we all know, his performance in that difficult role inspired President Obama to appoint him Secretary of Education
- d) The work of improving education, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary in Chicago is not finished, but thanks to Secretary Duncan and many other dedicated leaders, we've made enormous progress. I have a personal stake in Chicago schools. A few weeks ago my first grandson graduated from kindergarten in a fine Chicago public school. His two younger brothers and baby sister will be coming right behind. Gene