Policy Brief

P-16

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3442 • 303.299.3600 • Fax: 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

Landmines P-16/P-20 Councils Encounter — and How They Can Be Addressed (or Avoided Altogether)

By Jennifer Dounay

November 2008

"The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry"

To improve student transitions from early learning through postsecondary, 38 states have established P-16 or P-20 councils, bringing together a variety of stakeholders, including education leaders across the education continuum, business leaders, state policymakers and other constituents. Yet despite the best intentions of council participants and the promise of P-16 alignment for meaningful education reform, many councils are struggling to achieve their potential. Challenges — of membership, vague agendas, funding, politics — can overwhelm the best of intentions, but such challenges are not insurmountable.

Common problems P-16 councils face — and sections of this paper that address those problems

- *Difficulty finding focus* — see "Agenda," p 5-6
- *The big report that goes nowhere* — see
    - "Too few," p 2-3
    - "Difficulty agreeing on an agenda," p 5-6
    - "No way to measure progress or hold individuals accountable," p 7
    - "Appropriation of resources," p 7-9
- *No funding to get things done* — see "Limited financial resources," p 8
- *No staff to get things done* — see "Limited human resources," p 8-9
- *No public awareness of/support for council's work* — see "Limited financial resources," p 8
- *Lack of continuity when state leadership changes* — see "Political Climate," p 9-10

Building upon the findings of the ECS database on P-16 and P-20 councils, and experience in the states, this policy brief sets forth the numerous challenges that can foil the best-laid plans of P-16 and P-20 councils, and suggests how they can be addressed or avoided altogether. These "landmines" lie in four areas: **Actors**, **Agenda**, **Appropriation of Resources** and **Political Climate**.

Note: While "P-16" and "P-20" refer to different areas of focus ("P-16" denotes a scope of focus culminating in the baccalaureate, while "P-20" extends that scope to graduate, doctoral and professional programs such as medical and law schools), the terms are used interchangeably in this brief.

Actors

Having the right members at the table can help ensure the coherency and continuity of a council's efforts, and increase the likelihood that a council's recommendations will find their way to enactment in policy and implementation by state agencies. Alternatively, alignment efforts can fall short of their potential as a result of "Goldilocks Syndrome": when too few, too many or not the right group of people are at the table. The problem is exacerbated when council members' roles and responsibilities are not clearly specified at the outset, or when council members do not meet on at least a quarterly basis.

Problem 1: Too few

Why is it a problem? Council membership typically includes the state's chief state school officer, higher education executive officer, members of state-level K-12 and postsecondary governing boards, and representatives of business and economic development interests. But councils also should consider including at least one explicit early learning representative, and representatives from the legislative and executive branches. Excluding these three key stakeholder groups can work to the detriment of councils' efforts.

Food for thought: Although chief state school officers can provide one perspective on early learning offerings, prekindergarten and birth-to-5 education programs are administered across multiple departments. Including an early learning representative can help bridge the disjointed early learning space. Perhaps because few states include explicit early learning representatives in council membership, few councils have broached — much less impacted — early learning. Yet when students entering school are not ready to learn, they often fall behind, do not complete high school or do not pursue a postsecondary degree.

And while some raise concerns that including lawmakers on P-16 councils may "politicize" the process, P-16 reform possibilities are limited without the buy-in and support of elected leaders who influence policy and authorize funding. Governors often hold a bully pulpit position; legislators can advocate for council recommendations to be codified and funded.

Including legislators and governors as council members can maintain communication so that state leaders hear directly from education constituencies the challenges they are facing and potential solutions to such problems. And conversely, K-12 and postsecondary leaders can learn from political leaders the roadblocks their solutions may encounter, and ways to overcome these roadblocks.

Inclusion of lawmakers on P-16 councils furthermore reduces the likelihood that the legislature or other agencies will begin building "parallel tracks" because one hand doesn't know what the other is doing. Having everyone at the table reduces the potential for duplication of efforts within a state.

Lastly, councils should seek to ensure that meetings are attended by primary members rather than these members' designees. Allowing members to have designees attend council meetings reduces the likelihood that the council's work will be perceived as important, and that fidelity to council objectives will be maintained.

Admittedly, when a state's legislative majority and governor are of the same party, there may be less need for both branches to be represented on the council, as they are likely to agree on recommendations or proposals. However, when the legislative majority and governor are of opposing parties, inclusion of both sides is of vital importance if council recommendations are to find their way into enacted legislation. Councils convened by a chief state school officer (rather than by executive order), will likely need to overcome challenges to ensure the governor's participation on the council.

What states have done: The table below illustrates how P-16 councils have included early learning representatives from a variety of sources: state-level early childhood departments, coordinating boards or councils; departments of health and human services; state-level advocacy organizations; early learning providers; and university-based researchers.

Early learning constituency	State	Name of state-specific entity
Government/administration		
State-level early childhood department, coordinating board or council	Arizona	Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board
	Delaware	Delaware Early Care and Education Office
	Georgia	Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
	Kansas	Kansas Children's Cabinet
	Kentucky	Early Childhood Development, Kentucky Department of Education
	Pennsylvania	Office of Child Development and Early Learning (jointly overseen by Department of Public Welfare and Department of Education)
	Washington (2)	One member each from Washington Learns Early Learning Council and Washington State Department of Early Learning
Department of health and human services	Arkansas	Department's Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
	Nebraska	CEO, Department of Health and Human Services

On-the-ground		
State-level advocacy organization	California	Preschool California
	Hawaii (2)	One member each from Good Beginnings Alliance and Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children
	Nebraska	Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children
Local early learning provider	Colorado	Mile High Montessori
	Hawaii	Kamehameha Schools
	Montana	Montana School for the Deaf and Blind
	Ohio	Child Development Center of Franklin County, Inc.
	Wyoming	Wyoming Child and Family Development, Inc.
University-based researcher	California	Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley
Unspecified		
Representatives of the early learning community (generalized)	Arizona, Illinois, Maryland, Virginia	

Nineteen P-16 councils include one or more legislators. Six states — **Illinois**, **Indiana**, **Ohio**, **Oklahoma**, **Pennsylvania** and **Wisconsin** — have avoided politization by including council members who reflect majority and minority legislative leaders. To maximize the likelihood that council recommendations will be heard and supported by those with the greatest potential to advocate for policy change, councils also should encourage the inclusion of legislators who hold legislative leadership positions, or who chair committees related to education.

While 26 states have included a representative of the governor's office (i.e., the governor, lieutenant governor, a policy advisor, etc.), eight states — including some of the states that have seen the greatest momentum in P-16 reform, such as **Indiana**, **North Carolina** and **Rhode Island** — explicitly include the governor as a member of the council, often as a chair or co-chair. The governor's presence clearly sets the tone for the importance of the council's work.

The executive order creating **Arizona**'s P-20 council specifies that members may not send designees to represent them at council meetings, and that members who miss more than three meetings are subject to replacement at the governor's discretion.[1]

The legislation creating the **Indiana** Education Roundtable secures the participation of the governor and chief state school officer by naming them co-chairs of the roundtable.

Problem 2: Too many

Why is it a problem? A search for inclusiveness can result in too many members. A super-sized council may struggle to clearly define member responsibilities, set a vision, mission and agenda for the group, or simply find dates on which a quorum of members can meet. A council's inability to agree due to conflicting priorities or an absence of a clear vision, mission and agenda for the group can ultimately hurt the legitimacy of the council, and influence others to view it as ineffective.

What states have done: Councils under development might wish to follow the example of **Colorado** and other states that embrace the participation but limit the number of community- or institution-based members who vote. Ad-hoc members are invited to participate and vote in Colorado P-20 Council subcommittee meetings, but are not expected to attend meetings of the full P-20 council, and do not vote at full council meetings.

Problem 3: Not the right members

Why is it a problem? Even a moderately-sized council may gain limited policy traction when too many members lack authority to adopt and/or implement policy, and/or appropriate resources. Not having the right members may also impede councils from making the appropriate connections to ensure P-16 alignment.

Food for thought: While there's no "magic number," councils should seek to achieve a balanced number of individuals representing P-12 and postsecondary, and a balance between state-level P-12 and postsecondary representatives, and representatives such as business and community leaders.

Where a majority of members lack authority to make changes at the state level, a council might consider limiting the attendance to one or more "delegates" from such groups, thus also saving the council expenses related to reimbursement of travel costs.

What states have done: Indiana legislation codifying the Education Roundtable provides one means of ensuring a balance among the stakeholders representing P-12, postsecondary, and business and community leaders. Representatives of each of these constituencies are jointly appointed by the governor and state superintendent; senate and house representatives are appointed by the leadership from each chamber. The number of K-12 and postsecondary leaders must equal the number of business and community leaders.[2]

Problem 4: Confusion regarding council mission and member roles

Why is it a problem? Council efforts may be hamstrung when members are not fully apprised of the council's larger vision and mission. Likewise, limited policy traction can occur when members are unclear of their roles and responsibilities.

Food for thought: As early as possible after a council's creation, council members should seek to establish a vision that clearly defines the reason for the council's existence and the roles of the stakeholders who will serve on the council. The council should also define a mission that indicates what the council aspires to accomplish.

Council membership and roles should reflect that the primary duty of P-20 council members is to recommend policy changes, influence legislatures and K-12 and postsecondary governing bodies in enacting these changes, and for council members in positions of authority to see that policy changes are implemented. Community and business voices, by contrast, are present to inform state leaders of needs identified on-the-ground, assist in defining policy solutions to address those needs, inform their constituencies of the council's activities while seeking their buy-in or feedback, and to bring this feedback back to the council.

Another potential role of the business community is to bring to the table where high school and postsecondary institutions are not preparing an adequate number of graduates — or adequately prepared graduates — in key or growing industries in the state, and to be at the table when high school and postsecondary faculty work to establish aligned college/work-ready standards, curricula and assessments. Representatives of the business community should also be invited to participate in conversations about how "real-work" experience can be integrated into high school graduation requirements or teacher preparation/professional development programs, especially when these conversations relate to STEM and career/technical education. Representatives of business may also bring to the attention of other P-20 stakeholders model partnerships between industry and K-12/postsecondary in other states, and seek to replicate these in their own state.

Should a council's recommendations be enacted into policy, business and community members' roles are to keep the council informed of the progress and challenges of implementation at the local level, so that adjustments can be made if necessary.

What states have done: While it is not clear how many councils have developed a vision or mission statement, some 30 P-16 councils have posted their mission statement online, helping increase public accountability for councils to adhere to their stated mission.[3]

It is not apparent from ECS' analysis that states have established the appropriate roles of council members through enabling legislation and executive orders; however, these roles may be clarified through informal communications.

Problem 5: Inertia

Why is it a problem? Even when the right people are on board, councils may suffer from inertia when they meet on less than a quarterly basis. Members may have trouble remembering the proceedings of earlier meetings. Action items may take on less urgency when the council will not meet again for many months.

What states have done: Council meetings occur on at least a quarterly basis in 29 states, including **Arizona** and **Colorado**, whose councils have impacted significant policy change even though their current structures have been in place only since 2005 and 2007, respectively. [4]

Agenda

Once the actors are in place, a council can focus on the question: On which pressure points will the state focus to improve student achievement and smooth transitions from early learning to K-12 to postsecondary? P-20 council efforts can falter when the reform agenda is not reasonably honed, or if the agenda is not tied to specific, measurable, incremental goals that individuals are accountable for achieving.

Problem 1: Too broad

Why is it a problem? P-16 councils can unintentionally hinder their own efforts by setting an overly ambitious reform agenda. Seeking to address too many areas of reform, councils may ultimately achieve few if any reforms. As Jan Kettlewell notes in her commentary, "Setting a P-16 Agenda," the charge to the first Georgia P-16 council, created in 1996, "was rather … all-encompassing, and a state-level agenda that could be acted upon never took root."[5]

Food for thought: A P-16 council's reform agenda, especially at the outset, should focus on a small number of issues (a good rule of thumb might be five). Because the agendas established in enabling legislation or through executive order often target a far greater number of issues, councils need to prioritize those issues. Once a council's recommendations and other activities on initial reform issues has begun to gain traction, it can then address a larger agenda.

What states have done: Indiana's P-16 council has been in place for a decade. Having achieved results on a narrower set of issues, it unveiled a larger, 10-point P-16 reform agenda in 2003.

Problem 2: Too vague

Why is it a problem? Jan Kettlewell also observes in her commentary, "Setting a P-16 Agenda," that the charge to the first Georgia P-16 council was "unfocused," which, in addition to the broad nature of the charge, impeded the council's capacity to develop an actionable agenda.[6]

Food for thought: Noble goals set forth for P-16 councils in enabling legislation or executive orders — improving student achievement, improving postsecondary completion, etc. — need to be distilled into actionable specifics. And when councils are working to identify which issues to address, they should consider whether issues are overwhelming or relatively minor. A smaller question might not demand the full council's attention, while action on an overwhelming conundrum might yield disappointing results. Councils should seek to tackle problems that are challenging, yet solvable.

Problem 3: Difficulty agreeing on an agenda

Why is it a problem? Given that council members represent differing K-12, postsecondary and (hopefully) early learning constituencies, achieving consensus on an initial reform agenda can prove difficult. And as stated earlier, a council's inability to reach agreement on a common agenda can ultimately hurt the legitimacy of the council, and influence others to view it as ineffective. When members indicate an unwillingness or inability to compromise to reach consensus, everyone loses.

Food for thought: A critical question for councils as they begin to set agendas is, "What can I do through this convening of systems that I would be unable to do within my own agency or institution?" In other words, the best areas of focus do not include issues that could be addressed in isolation from other education sectors. Kettlewell suggests that "school-to-college transitions for students" and "college-to-school transitions for educators" (including teachers, administrators and other staff) "constitute an appropriate state P-16 agenda[.]"[7]

Even within these two areas of focus, however, many potential avenues of activity present themselves. Kettlewell asks how states can determine the cause of the high postsecondary remediation rates in math, so that an appropriate course of action can be taken. "Is there a curricular gap between high school and college? A gap in the level of expectations? In the rigor of assessments? Is the gap caused by too few highly qualified math teachers in high schools? By the teaching practices in colleges' introductory mathematics courses?" Careful analysis of all possible causes of system failure and all available data help equip councils with deeper focus and the potential for greater results.

Many states have correctly perceived that they cannot improve the P-12 to postsecondary pipeline if no early learning student data are collected. Likewise, without appropriate data systems, it is impossible to track K-12 students' progression into and success in postsecondary education. To address this absence of data, P-16 councils should make it a priority to assist in the development of longitudinal data systems that provide this crucial information.

What states have done: The majority of P-16 councils currently appear to have longitudinal data efforts underway to identify and address areas of need in the P-16 pipeline.[8]

In a small number of states, legislation or executive order has given the council clear "homework assignments" that set a deadline for the council to issue recommendations intended to inform future legislation or rulemaking. **Ohio** legislation has directed the partnership for continued learning (the state's P-16 council) to issue recommendations on several areas, including the criteria by which state universities might waive the rigorous Ohio core curriculum as an undergraduate admissions requirement; means to assess high school students' college readiness in English and math; and legislative changes that would improve the operation of the state's postsecondary enrollment options (dual enrollment) program.[9]

Texas legislation enacted in 2006 required the P-16 council to recommend to the commissioner of education and higher education coordinating board a college readiness and success strategic action plan to decrease the number of students enrolling in developmental courses at institutions of higher education. The plan had to encompass, among other items, definitions of college readiness and recommendations regarding changes to certification and professional development requirements that would help teachers better prepare students for higher education. The legislation directed the commissioner of education and coordinating board to adopt the council's recommended college readiness and success strategic action plan if the commissioner and board determined it met the requirements set forth in legislation.[10] The council adopted recommendations in November 2006; rules incorporating the recommendations were adopted by the higher education coordinating board in 2007.[11]

Problem 4: No specific, measurable goals

Why is it a problem? Without specific, measurable performance goals, it is impossible for even those councils with a well-honed agenda to determine their state's progress toward or achievement of the council's goals.

Food for thought: The best goals are statistical in nature and hinge on the collection of reliable data, with a reasonable date by which they might be attained. In place of a goal such as, "Students will enter college ready to learn," a goal might state, "The postsecondary remediation rate in mathematics at four-year public institutions will be reduced to 25% by 2016."

How states get it done: Sixteen states already have set numeric P-16 performance goals, either through the P-16 council or independently of it. **Arizona** aims to increase the state's high school graduation rate by 12% by 2012. **Louisiana** plans to improve readiness for postsecondary education, as demonstrated by a 5% increase in the number of students scoring 18 or higher on the ACT English or math sections by 2015. **Arizona** and **Kentucky** intend to double the number of bachelor's degrees awarded by 2020.[12]

Problem 5: No way to measure progress or hold individuals accountable

Why is it a problem? Specific, measurable goals are less likely to be achieved if no means is in place to measure annual progress or hold individuals and agencies responsible for completing components of reform efforts at specified times.

How states get it done: Some states have developed "balanced scorecard" or similar systems to measure progress toward P-16 goals and establish accountability within the system. The Department of P-16 Initiatives in the University System of **Georgia** has developed a balanced scorecard that specifies five goals: (1) Influence improvements in the education of Georgia's students preschool through college; (2) Inform and influence change in P-16 policies and practices; (3) Promote partnerships and customer satisfaction; (4) Ensure organizational effectiveness; and (5) Ensure a departmental culture of innovation and high performance. Each goal has several performance measures. A method of measurement, a baseline year and number, a 2008 target, 2008 results and point person are set forth for each performance measure.

While many states are determined to improve the recruitment, preparation and professional development of teachers, counselors and school leaders, the Georgia balanced scorecard, for example, translates these goals into 13 performance measures and nearly 50 methods of measurement to assess progress. A sample page from the balanced scorecard is provided below.[13]

Performance Measure	Method of Measurement		Baseline Year	Baseline #	2007 Results	2008 Target	2008 Results	Point Person	P-16 Initiative
USG teacher production.	Percent of AFT students who complete teacher preparation programs-- disaggregated by math/science-related and other fields.		2015	TBD[1]		TBD[1]		Mark Pevey	MATH + SCIENCE = SUCCESS
	Percent of FOCUS students who complete teacher preparation programs-- disaggregated by math/science-related and other fields.		2013	TBD[1]		TBD[1]			Regents' Principles
	Number of program completers for initial teacher certification.		2004	3,157	3,822	5,784			Double, Double
	Number of program completers for initial teacher certification from minority populations.		2004	601	677	1,237			Destination Teaching
	Number of program completers for initial teacher certification in middle grades mathematics.		2007	218	218			Mark Pevey	MATH + SCIENCE = SUCCESS
	Number of program completers for initial teacher certification in middle grades science.[3]		2007	185	185				
	Number of program completers for initial teacher certification in high school mathematics.[3]		2007	131	131				
	Number of program completers for initial teacher certification in high school science[3]:	Biology	2007	29	29				
		Chemistry	2007	7	7				
		Physics	2007	0	0				
		Earth Science	2007	1	1				
Effectiveness of USG educator preparation programs on national accreditation standards.	Percent of USG teacher preparation institutions meeting NCATE standards, appropriate for their status (developmental or continuing approval).		1995	100%	Not yet available			Sara Connor	Regents' Principles
	Percent of USG counselor preparation programs meeting CACREP standards.		2005	44%	Not yet available				
	Percent of USG leader preparation programs meeting ELLC standards.		2009	TBD[2]		TBD[2]			

Other states have developed performance measures for councils themselves. The enabling executive order for the 21st Century Jobs Cabinet of **West Virginia**, that state's P-20 council, provides that the governor's office will determine performance measures for the cabinet based on eight specified criteria, including:

- Requiring joint planning and coordination among complementary initiatives
- Identifying duplicative and counterproductive programs and initiatives
- Identifying extant laws, regulation and practices that impede student articulation and transition
- Creating incentives for partnerships among institutions that may include access to innovation funding and mutual performance requirements.[14]

Appropriation of resources

Despite having the right people involved and setting the right agenda, a council's efforts may still fail to live up to their potential for reform because adequate human and financial resources have not been appropriated.

Limited financial resources

Why is it a problem? A lack of funding can limit the impact of the best council efforts. In addition to helping cover the cost of full-time equivalents (FTEs) to implement the council's work, council funding can support communication expenses to build public awareness of, support and demand for reforms.

Food for thought: In difficult economic times, it can be challenging for a state to allocate new funds to support a council's work. However, some councils have looked beyond state funding for financial support. As Jan Kettlewell notes, "The capacity to bring external funding to the table is really important because you don't have money at the state level to fund R&D work, and the truth is if we knew how to solve some of these problems, we would have solved them … If you only sit around the table and wait for the state to fund it all, or some new insight to drop from the sky on how to do this, you're going to stall out."[15]

What states have done: Roughly half of existing P-16 councils report that they receive a legislative appropriation, or that funds to support the council's' work are built into participating agencies' budgets beyond general operating expenses. Councils in 10 states receive business, foundation or other external support. **Arizona**'s P-20 Council is supported in part by tribal grants. The **California** P-16 Council receives grants from multiple foundations. The Intel Corporation has provided a STEM grant to **Colorado**'s P-20 Council. **Hawaii**'s and **Missouri**'s councils receive some federal grant support.

The **Nebraska** P-16 Leadership Council is sustained by three levels of subsidy: (1) "Senior partners," including state agencies and the EducationQuest Foundation, provide funding for the council's operating budget; (2) "Sponsoring organizations," which are state- and local-level associations, provide some financial support; and (3) "Supporting organizations" make in-kind contributions.

Perhaps unique among the states, **Wyoming**'s P-16 council has developed a "sustainability" subcommittee, working to secure three revenue streams for the council: state government/legislative contributions, foundation and private business support.[16]

Council funding also can help cover the costs of developing and maintaining a Web site that can provide members and the general public with information on council meeting schedules, agendas and minutes; council subcommittees and recommendations; links to reports and Web sites that relate to council areas of focus, etc.

Thirty-six states post council information online: 30 states post their council's mission statement; 27 post the council membership list; 22 post a meeting schedule; 17 post meeting agendas and minutes; and 14 states link to the council's authorizing executive order, legislation or board resolution.[17]

Limited human resources

Why is it a problem? One of the greatest challenges is securing staff to coordinate the council's efforts, to research potential policy solutions and to support policy implementation efforts. While some states such as **Kentucky** have enacted P-16 reforms by relying on existing agency staff, other states have seen little P-16 traction because existing staff are stretched thin. Having a minimum .5 FTE or more can prevent council efforts from being delayed or set aside in favor of other priorities.

What states have done: Generally speaking, councils that receive state funding or external support are supported by at least a .5 FTE. With the exception of **Oklahoma** and **Maryland**, those that rely on the "pro bono" support of participating agencies are not staffed by a minimum .5 FTE.[18]

Jan Kettlewell suggests that the two-tiered structure of **Georgia**'s P-16 work has contributed to the success of her state's efforts.

> "[The current P-16 structure] comprises the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, which includes the CEOs of all state education agencies, and the Alliance Implementation Team,

which consists of two individuals from each agency, with additional people participating in committees. These two groups work interactively, with the alliance setting the goals and the implementation team devising strategies and initiatives to reach them. At least two members of the alliance attend implementation-team meetings to ensure communication between the two groups. … Georgia now has a state P-16 agenda to be acted upon, with specific strategies, initiatives, and points of accountability. Different members of the Alliance Implementation Team take the lead on each strategy, and the work is accomplished through cross-agency teams. …

"We have found … that there is great value in having a two-tiered structure like the one we have in place now. Participation by CEOs is critical to keeping P-16 work high on the agendas of state agencies, as well as of the schools or colleges and universities that each represents. But this is not enough. A second tier of those knowledgeable about P-16 work is needed to lead implementation efforts and sustain progress. Based on Georgia's experience, it is safe to say that having either tier without the other will result in little sustainable progress."[19]

External funds in **Georgia** also have made possible research and development to test

"strategies in 15 school districts and seven colleges and universities that relate to strengthening the student P-16 pipeline in science and math, and improving the quality of teaching available to both K-12 and college students in these fields. The lessons learned through research and development allow us to then suggest strategies — through the Alliance Implementation Team to the Alliance of Education Agency Heads — for statewide consideration. The R&D work has brought a depth, richness, and credibility to our policy recommendations, and to the P-16 collaborative programs in science and math we are implementing, that would not have been possible without it."

North Carolina also uses a two-tiered approach. The seven-member Education Cabinet, which includes the governor, heads of the state department and state board, the presidents of the two public and one private university systems, and the secretary of health and human services, meets one to three times a year. An unofficial "kitchen cabinet" — comprised of one staff member who supports each Cabinet member — meets every six to eight weeks, as needed.[20]

Political Climate

A state's culture and political climate can make or break the best-designed P-16 efforts. As Patrick Callan and Michael Kirst observe, "States that are successful in integrating precollegiate and higher education share the presence of an external civic culture that stresses a belief that the two levels must come together to improve the labor force and the economy."[21]

Yet states face a number of challenges that can thwart the fostering of this civic culture. While these challenges tend to fall into the categories of "Actors," "Agenda" and "Appropriation of Resources," ECS wishes to highlight these issues in a separate section of the paper, so as to draw attention to the fact that there are no easy answers to resolve them. If these problems can be anticipated, states may find it easier to work through them — or avoid them altogether.

These challenges include:
- The disruption that occurs when a governor or other popular leader (i.e., chief state school officer) provides vision for the council and sustains its momentum — and then the leader leaves office or the enabling executive order expires, etc.
- Political tensions created by openly partisan leadership or strongly partisan members
- A lack of continuity when a change in state leadership results in an overhaul of successful reform efforts (i.e., new governor with his/her own agenda disregards the work of the existing council and creates a new council with entirely different actors and agenda)
- The coexistence of similar entities doing similar P-16 work in the same state
- An absence of P-16 finance structures that incentivize P-12 and postsecondary collaboration
- An absence of P-16 accountability structures to support student transitions from early learning through postsecondary.

Even where these challenges exist, all is not lost, however. A lack of continuity following a change in state leadership may be mitigated by actions such as changing the locus of authority for establishing a P-16 council, or modifying the membership.

In terms of P-16 finance structures, the 2005 study [The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success](#) suggests that when states have multiple committees with discretion over education — K-12, postsecondary and appropriations — it creates an environment of competition among sectors rather than collaboration. The authors suggest that reforms driven by "strong state-level leadership, perhaps with support from the business community" have the potential for positive change.[22] In a 2006 report, the same authors point to a model developed by the Oregon Business Council that would base budgets on per-student costs per service. While obstacles to implementing the model remain, the system would allow the state to "reduce financial inefficiencies, target resources more strategically, improve student achievement across every educational level, and provide a more transparent and unified system of financing. The council has suggested that the benefits would also include more informed decisions for policy and educational leaders; transparency of tax dollar use; the creation of opportunities for broad redesign and reinvention; and increases in program effectiveness by focusing on service quality and continuous improvement."[23]

As for P-16 accountability, Stephen Portch, Chancellor Emeritus of the University System of Georgia outlines one model for such a system in a 2002 [briefing paper](#).[24] Meanwhile, the authors of the aforementioned 2005 and 2006 studies point to components of Kentucky's postsecondary accountability system that have clear connections to K-12 inputs and results.

Closing considerations

While differences in education governance structures, state size and other factors make clear that no "cookie-cutter" solution will work for every state, this policy brief is intended to provide general guidelines to help states think through the current membership, functions and support — and the political climate of their state — to find solutions to identified problems or prevent problems before they arise.

What we still don't know
Though P-16 councils in some states have been in place for 10 years or more, the following questions are ripe for future research:
- Does it matter whether the council's **coordinating body** (i.e., the lead agency serving a convening role), is the governor's office, or the state department of education, or a higher education administrative office, or some combination thereof?
- Does it matter who provides the **staffing for the council** — whether it's the governor's office, the state education agency (SEA), a higher education body, or some combination thereof? That is, might a directive hold more weight coming from the governor's office instead of the SEA — but then again, in an age of term limits, might there be more experience and institutional stability in the SEA or higher education body? And when there are staff, how many are enough? How many FTEs might be too many? Can having staff lead to implementation of projects that duplicate individual institutions efforts?
- Does it matter where the council receives its **funding** — from department budgets, foundation or business support?
- What is the impact of **local and/or regional councils** in identifying needs on the ground? Is it bringing them to the attention of state-level leaders, helping ensure reforms are implemented with fidelity on the ground, and/or providing a "support group" among local and regional role-players across a state? Are they necessary in all but the smallest states? And to what degree do the questions regarding state-level council's coordinating body, staffing and funding apply to local and regional councils?

The answers to these questions may help states to avoid landmines even more effectively — and address those not yet foreseen.

Jennifer Dounay, project manager for ECS' High School Policy Center, can be reached at 303.299.3689 or jdounay@ecs.org

[1] Arizona Executive Order 2008-14

[2] IND. CODE ANN. § 20-19-4-3

[3] Editorial Projects in Education, *Diplomas Count 2008*, "P-16 Councils — Online Information," accessed August 12, 2008 at http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/40ecs_overview-online.h27.pdf

[4] ECS database, "P-16/P-20 Councils: Council Meets at Least Once a Quarter," (accessed 13 August 2008); available from: http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=2044

[5] Jan Kettlewell, "Setting a P-16 Agenda," as published in *Diplomas Count 2008*. *Education Week*. Vol. 27, no. 40, (June 5, 2008), 22, 26-27.

[6] *ibid.*

[7] *ibid.*

[8] ECS database, "P-16/P-20 Councils: List of Issues/Initiatives Council Is Addressing," (accessed 12 August 2008); available from: http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=2046

[9] *ibid.*

[10] TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 61.0761

[11] *P-16 Implementation Report: College Readiness and Success Strategic Action Plan.* [report online] (Austin: Texas Education Agency and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, December 2006, accessed 19 August 2008); available from TEA http://www.tea.state.tx.us/comm/cr_implementationreport.pdf; Internet; 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 4.171 through 1.77

[12] ECS database, "P-16/P-20 Councils: State has P-16/P-20 Performance Goals," (accessed 13 August 2008); available from: http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=2047

[13] Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, "2008 Balanced Scorecard," revised November 5, 2007 (accessed 13 August 2008); available from: http://www.usg.edu/p16/resources/PDFs/P-16_Balanced_Score_Card.pdf

[14] ECS database, "P-16/P-20 Councils," (accessed 19 August 2008); available from: www.ecs.org/P-20

[15] Scott J. Cech, "P-16 Councils Bring All Tiers of Education to the Table," as published in *Diplomas Count 2008*. *Education Week*. Vol. 27, no. 40 (June 5, 2008), 6-9.

[16] ECS database, "P-16/P-20 Councils: Source of Council's Funding," (accessed 12 August 2008); available from: http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=2043

[17] Editorial Projects in Education

[18] ECS databases, "P-16/P-20 Councils: Source of Council's Funding" and "Council Supported by at Least .5 FTE," (accessed 13 August 2008); available from: http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=2043 and http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=2045

[19] Jan Kettlewell

[20] ECS database, "P-16/P-20 Councils," (accessed 13 August 2008); available from: www.ecs.org/P-20

[21] Patrick M. Callan and Michael W. Kirst, "Righting a Troublesome 'Disjuncture,'" as published in *Diplomas Count 2008*. *Education Week*. Vol. 27, no. 40 (June 5, 2008), 22-25.

[22] Andrea Venezia, Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst, and Michael D. Usdan, *The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success.* [report online] (San Jose: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, September 2005, accessed 19 August 2008); available from NCPPHE: http://www.highereducation.org/reports/governance_divide/governance_divide.pdf; Internet.

[23] Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst, Michael D. Usdan, and Andrea Venezia, *Claiming Common Ground: State Policymaking for Improving College Readiness and Success.* [report online] (San Jose: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, March 2006, accessed 19 August 2008); available from NCPPHE: http://www.highereducation.org/reports/common_ground/common_ground.pdf; Internet.

[24] Stephen Portch, *A Noble Opportunity: Leading Education Change Through a P-16 Accountability Model.* [report online] (Denver: Education Commission of the States, May 2002, accessed 19 August 2008); available from ECS: http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/40/03/4003.doc; Internet.