

**Senate Committee on Higher Education and Tourism  
Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities  
Joint Meeting, March 2, 2005**

**Testimony  
Presented by  
Daniel Clancy, President  
Wisconsin Technical College System**

Thank you, President Reilly. I would also like to thank Senator Harsdorf and Representative Kreibich for extending an invitation to address both committees on higher education.

President Reilly has spoken to you about the ongoing efforts of the two systems to improve transfer opportunities for technical college students seeking to continue their education in the University of Wisconsin System.

The first five points of the transfer agreement President Reilly described dealt with the concrete steps to improve transfer from the WTCS to the UWS.

The sixth point of the transfer agreement called for creation of a joint committee appointed by the Board of Regents and the Technical College System Board.

This joint Committee on Baccalaureate Expansion was charged with taking a more comprehensive look at cost effective strategies to increase access to baccalaureate education in Wisconsin. I would like to provide an overview and update on the Committee's recommendations and on our plan to implement those recommendations.

When the Legislature established our two Systems in the early 1970s, the mission of the WTCS was to prepare its students for employment in occupations requiring less than a baccalaureate degree. Now, Wisconsin's economy is in transition. We are in the process of moving to a new knowledge-based economy in which success will depend on how well and how quickly we can put what we know to work. A key indicator of the new economy is the percentage of jobs requiring higher education.

You have already discussed how Wisconsin lags behind our neighboring states in terms of the number of residents with a baccalaureate degree. In 2000, Wisconsin ranked only 30<sup>th</sup> among the states in the percentage of the adult population with a baccalaureate degree and continues to lag far behind our neighboring states of Minnesota and Illinois. Just to match the national average, Wisconsin would need to add more than 72,000 additional college graduates to its population over the next ten years. President Reilly and I believe that as a result of COBE and the ongoing discussions taking place between our two Systems, Wisconsin's higher education institutions are positioned to meet this challenge.

The educational needs of Wisconsin's employers and its workforce are evolving and our postsecondary systems must respond to those needs. Success in today's labor market requires

continuing education and training, not just beyond high school, but over the course of a lifetime. While our technical college graduates readily find good paying jobs, increasingly they need and want access, not just to continuing education, but to baccalaureate education as well. I would like to assure the members of the committees that the WTCS focus remains on preparing our students to begin their careers. At the same time, we need to create more seamless pathways for our graduates into the UW System. We at the technical college system see COBE and implementation of the recommendations that it developed as playing a major role in helping Wisconsin develop the workforce our state will need.

COBE began its deliberations last Spring. The Committee's final report was completed in January 2005. Copies of the final report from COBE and the Executive Summary have been made available to you today.

I would like to point to some features of the COBE effort that have distinguished it from our other work on improving transfer. First, COBE was chaired by Regent Chuck Pruitt and WTCS Board President and Regent Brent Smith and four other Board members were part of the Committee. Second, the Committee included not only active involvement of members of the two governing boards but also System administrators, faculty, and students. Third, the Committee highlighted the need to develop strategies to serve groups that are currently under-represented in higher education—working age adults, students of color, and students from lower income families.

The recommendations from COBE are summarized on the back of the Executive Summary. These 13 recommendations fall in to three broad categories:

- A set of strategies that address some programmatic changes and collaborative ways of delivering instruction. These include new degree options for technical college graduates and additional opportunities for students to access baccalaureate education provided by UWS faculty at technical college campuses. These efforts should be driven by labor market demand. Our goal is to identify programs, degrees, and areas in which to expand services that will meet the needs of the state's employers as well as student demand. Some of the areas discussed include new or expanded programs and degrees in fields such as business, health care, and engineering. These programmatic strategies will be particularly important tools to increase access for place-bound, working adults—people with strong ties to their communities and who are most likely to remain in Wisconsin once they have gotten their baccalaureate degree.
- A second set of strategies that focus on increased outreach, counseling, and advising efforts for high school youth, young adults, and returning students; and
- A commitment to advocate jointly for increased state and federal financial aid to increase access to higher education for students from lower income families.

Finally, the report recommends the establishment of an implementation process to ensure that the two Systems continue to work together on these issues. President Reilly and I have already begun meeting to discuss that process. We have agreed to establish a steering committee

charged with overseeing implementation of the COBE recommendations and we have begun inventorying existing collaborative efforts between the state's technical colleges and UW System institutions.

A key suggestion coming out of COBE was that we should encourage technical colleges and UW campuses to pilot implementation of the recommendations. Our inventory will provide us with some baseline data to evaluate the pilot efforts. One of the key things we want to do by encouraging piloting of the recommendations is to be able to identify what works. That information should help both the WTCS and the UW System to target our resources to encourage further collaboration.

We recognize that none of the recommendations alone will be sufficient by themselves to dramatically increase the number of baccalaureate degree holders in Wisconsin. But, implementation of the proposals as a whole holds promise for increasing access to opportunities for higher education for Wisconsin's residents.

I want to emphasize that these strategies seek to:

- expand access to diverse populations,
- provide market-driven solutions, and
- build the foundation for long-term commitment between the two Systems to increase access to educational opportunities.

We believe that none of the recommended strategies blurs the missions of the WTCS or the UWS. Instead, each contributes to improving our joint efforts to assist students in accessing the education they will need over their life times. And finally, these strategies focus on meeting the needs of our students, their employers, and the taxpayers of our state in the most cost efficient ways we can identify.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.