

# Grapevine

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## TIMELY DATA CIRCULATED WHILE CURRENT

Reports on state tax legislation; state appropriations for universities, colleges,  
and community colleges; legislation affecting education beyond the high school.

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"The complexity and intensity of the state government's relations with higher education over the next decade will demand new and creative solutions. What worked in the past may not be adequate today. State and institutional leaders share responsibility for ensuring that mechanisms are established to resolve major conflicts while advancing essential values and interests of both the states and higher education."

-- Aims McGuinness, GRAPEVINE, this issue, page 2058

THE SEARCH FOR MORE EFFECTIVE STATE POLICY LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
RECENT TRENDS IN STATE POLICY RELATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION

For the remaining years of the 1980s, the relationship between state government and higher education is likely to be more intense, complex, and potentially troublesome than in any period in the past decade. Renewed recognition is being given to the central role that the higher education system plays in a state's economic future: in the ability to attract new industry and in the state's overall social, economic, and cultural well-being. This is fueling a new sense of urgency regarding the effectiveness and responsiveness of the state's system for governing and financing higher education. It is not uncommon to hear a governor or state legislator remark, "We can't hope to compete with other states for new industry and jobs if we keep spreading our limited state resources across too many mediocre institutions, and we can't get our act together amid the intense bickering among various institutional interests," or "I'd be willing to put much more money into higher education if only I had confidence that the priorities were more clearly defined, the missions of institutions more sharply focused, and confidence that the existing coordinating structure was making tough choices among competing options."

Table I. Major State Higher Education Studies, 1985-86

Period	Legislative Committees	Study Commission Est. by Gov/Leg.	Study by Board	Consultant Team Report
January 1985 to January 1986	Idaho*	Colorado Maine Pennsylvania	Florida New York	Mississippi South Carolina
1986	California New Mexico Wisconsin	California Connecticut** Maryland New Jersey** Oklahoma Rhode Island Texas	Missouri North Dakota Wisconsin	Louisiana North Carolina

\*Idaho interim committee on governance and community college issues  
\*\*State policy and independent higher education  
Source: *Education Commission of the States*

STATE STUDIES AND BLUE RIBBON COMMISSIONS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

As an indication of growing state concerns, in March 1986, thirteen states had special studies or blue ribbon commissions. These ranged from comprehensive studies of the future of higher education to more narrowly defined examinations of issues such as governance or independent higher education. Another eight states completed such studies in 1985 or early 1986. As indicated in Table I, a number of the studies were under the direction of a legislative committee or of a commission or task force established by the governor or legislature.

Not reflected in Table I are the planning activities and special studies by state higher education boards carried out in accord with their statutory responsibilities. For example, boards in Alaska, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New York, and West Virginia either completed or are in the final stages of revising strategic or master plans. The coordinating boards in states such as California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Virginia are engaged in a series of special studies in the course of their continuing planning responsibilities.

REORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In the majority of states undertaking higher education studies, reorganization of higher education governance is only one of several issues being explored. Nevertheless, in those states where reorganization is a strong possibility, a motivating force is a sense among the political leaders that what the state needs is a strategic vision of the role that higher education can play in the state's future and new leadership with the authority and prestige to carry out that vision. More effective governance is seen as an essential prerequisite to obtaining that leadership.

During 1985, approximately 10 states considered reorganization of structures for coordination and governance of higher education. Changes were actually enacted only in Colorado and Washington. As 1986 began, serious proposals for major changes in governance were considered but not adopted in West Virginia. In Idaho and Mississippi, proposals were raised to strengthen the existing governing boards' responsibility for all the states' senior institutions, but in neither state did these advance in the legislative process. In about half of the states with study groups active in 1986, recommendations for changes in governance are a possibility.

In light of this activity, several questions are frequently asked. Is there, in fact, more instability in state structure today in contrast to the past 10 to 15 years? Are there discernible trends or are there contrasts between the current activity and earlier reorganization efforts? Are there any lessons from other states' experiences that states should consider as they think about reorganization options?

## The Record of the 1970s and 1980s

With the exceptions of only a few states, the basic patterns of state-level organization of higher education across the nation today were in place in the early '70s. The year 1972 marked the culmination of more than a decade of development of state higher education agencies formed to coordinate the massive expansion of higher education in the late '50s and '60s. By that year, 47 states had established either consolidated governing boards responsible for all senior institutions (and in some cases, community and junior colleges also) or coordinating boards responsible for statewide planning and coordination of two or more governing boards. Three small states with a limited number of institutions continued to handle statewide higher education issues through the existing governing boards and direct involvement of the governor and the legislature without a special statewide coordinating or governing agency.

Through the '70s, 12 states made changes in higher education structure that could be characterized as significant: seven states that had previously adopted a coordinating board as opposed to a statewide governing board took steps to strengthen that coordinating function, either modifying the authority of the existing agency or replacing that agency with a new body with increased regulatory authority. Two states replaced their coordinating bodies with statewide governing boards. The other three states made adjustments in their structures that reflected their unique political and structural situations.

In general, the period of the '70s was one of maturation of the coordinating and governing patterns established in the previous decade. It was a period, however, of continued strengthening of the authority of state boards. Of even greater significance, the '70s saw a major increase in the involvement of other executive branch agencies and legislative staffs in higher education affairs, especially in budgetary matters. Increasingly sophisticated legislators, backed by professional staffs, became more directly involved in both the substance and procedures of state higher education policy.

In the early '80s, the pattern of the '70s continued. Major changes occurred in only a few states. Several states (Florida, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Tennessee, as examples) reorganized state-level governance of community colleges, vocational-technical institutes, and related programs. Other states, such as Pennsylvania, reorganized and consolidated the governance of major higher education sectors. Rhode Island abandoned its single board for all levels of education and established a separate governing board for its three public higher education institutions. The most far-reaching changes occurred in Massachusetts, where a new statewide governing board was established to replace all existing state agencies and boards and in Connecticut, where the idea of a single governing board was rejected and a new and strengthened coordinating board was established.

In 1985, Colorado and Washington replaced their existing coordinating boards with new and strengthened coordinating bodies. In both these cases, a range of alternatives were debated including a single statewide "superboard" and consolidation of a number of institutional boards under segmental boards. In early 1986, the Governor of West Virginia proposed that the State Board of Regents be replaced by a coordinating commission whose members would be three full-time salaried commissioners. The proposal would also have increased

the authority of institutional governing boards. The proposal was rejected by the legislature and the existing structure was continued for two years. In two states (Idaho and Mississippi) with single governing boards for several senior institutions, proposals were considered but not adopted to strengthen the board's staff by changing from an executive director to a chancellor with line authority and responsibility for a single university system.

## The Issues Involved in Governance Debates

Throughout the past 15 years, many of the issues motivating changes in coordinating and governing structures have been remarkably similar (and continue to be) despite variations among the states or changes in the overall context from year to year. One can trace most reorganization proposals to situations such as these:

*Actual or potential duplication of high-cost graduate and professional programs.* The issue may arise in a variety of ways: through pressures of a growing urban area to have accessible graduate and professional programs which would duplicate or threaten support for similar programs at the state's major research university (frequently located away from major urban areas), or through successful efforts of influential legislators or "end-runs" by institutions to get legislative approval of new programs.

*Visible conflict between the aspirations of two institutions (often under separate governing boards) located in one geographic area.* Major reorganization proposals (merger, consolidation, etc.) usually occur after years of less dramatic efforts to achieve improved cooperation and coordination.

*Legislative reaction to intense institutional lobbying.* As the governor and legislature face politically difficult and unattractive choices, increasingly focused on curtailment rather than expansion of programs, intense lobbying by competing institutional interests becomes a major irritant. Reorganization is seen as a way to push the battles away from the immediate political process in the hope that they can be resolved by a newly established or strengthened board. (Ironically, institutional representatives will invariably oppose the reorganization proposals as inappropriate intrusions into institutional autonomy, yet their own behavior in the legislative process may be the underlying motivation for the changes.)

*Proposals to close, merge, or change the missions of isolated, small institutions.* Quite often proposals to strengthen state governance arise from a sense that the current system is unable to contain political actions that appear to be contrary to good planning and efficient use of resources. More often than not the problem is that an influential legislator has succeeded in blocking action to change the mission or close an institution in his or her district because of serious economic consequences for the area; or a legislator has succeeded in getting a bill enacted to change the mission of an institution in his or her district despite evidence that the new mission is inappropriate.

*A sense that the existing higher education structure has been ineffective in addressing the issues for which it was established.* Many statewide coordinating and governing boards, as they carry out their responsibilities in no-man's land between state government and the institutions, will face proposals for their elimination in just about every legislative session; few of these advance beyond the bill stage. In states where serious reorganization proposals are made, political leaders frequently express opinions that the existing board (or its staff) is providing ineffective leadership or that it lacks the political influence and judgment to deal with critical issues facing the state. "Critical issues" may be defined as long-standing conflicts such as mentioned above. In many of these cases, the sense is that the existing board has been focusing more on detailed administrative or internal management affairs rather than the strategic policy issues facing the system or the state.

Far more than the formal authority of a board, the factors that most frequently define board effectiveness are the prestige and quality of board members; the ability of the board to function as a cohesive group rather than as a collection of individual interests; the ability of the board to organize its work to emphasize policy rather than administration through careful design of agendas and effective use of committees; and the reputation of the board staff among both political and institutional leaders for its objectivity, fairness, sound judgment and commitment to conflict resolution. Reorganization is often proposed not simply because the formal authority of the previous structure was insufficient but because of a desire to change the leadership and personalities involved in the process.

In addition to these consistent themes, one other is heard with increasing frequency: that limited public resources are being spread over too many institutions with too little attention being given to quality and unique missions. Assertions are made that the current system is failing to differentiate among institutions and programs according to quality and state priorities.

#### Status of State Structure: 1986

The status of state higher education boards according to the commonly used categories of "consolidated governing board" and "coordinating board" is shown in Table II. The table lists the states according to the extent of the authority of the principal higher education board or agency. Several states (Alaska, Oregon, Florida, and New Hampshire) are listed twice because they have both a consolidated governing board or multicampus system for their senior institutions as well as a coordinating or planning agency. Moving from left to right, the states with the most comprehensive statewide governing boards are listed on the left, whereas the states with coordinating boards or state agencies with only limited planning authority are listed toward the right. The extent of a state agency's authority to approve academic programs, followed by the board's role in the budgetary process, are used to place states in different columns.

The organizational structure, authority, and staffing of the higher education systems listed under "consolidated governing board" vary far more than the

two categories listed in Table II. The boards in Alaska and Wyoming are essentially responsible for single institutions. The boards in Florida, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin have governing responsibility for a number of separate institutions. With three exceptions, each of these boards has a chief executive officer with the title of chancellor or president who has line authority related to the campuses. The exceptions are Montana, North Dakota, and Rhode Island where the chief staff person is a commissioner with leadership responsibility but not line authority related to the campuses. In Arizona, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, and South Dakota, the boards have executive officers who are responsible primarily for staff support to the board rather than policy leadership and line authority for the system (Pettit, 1985).

Also not reflected in Table II are the variety of governing board arrangements within states with coordinating boards. These range from states in which each institution has its own governing board (Washington, for example), to states in which all institutions are under two or more consolidated governing boards or multicampus universities (California, Connecticut, Illinois, and Tennessee, as examples), to states with a mixed pattern of single institution boards, consolidated governing boards, and multicampus universities (Colorado and Maryland, as examples).

Other subtle differences among states that cannot be shown in an illustration underscore the danger of attempts to transpose one state's structure to another. For example:

*Different roles of the legislative and executive branches of state government.* In some states, the legislature plays the dominant role and effective relations with that branch of government are essential to the success of the coordinating or governing mechanism. In other states, the governor is the key figure.

*Different traditions regarding the state role in relation to institutions.* In some states, the government has traditionally treated all public institutions as state-owned and regulated agencies. The institutions are subject to the same procedural controls applicable to other state agencies. In other states, institutions are treated as state-assisted, privately controlled entities and are exempt from most state procedural controls. In still other states, the pattern is mixed.

*Intangible, subtle differences in tradition and quality of leadership.* What makes all classification difficult is that perhaps the most important distinguishing features of any state's higher education system relate to matters of tradition and leadership. While traditions may endure, the leadership capabilities of board members, the staffs of statewide agencies, and the chief executive officers of institutions change. A board that is recognized as strong and effective at one point may be seen as weak and ineffective at another, primarily because of changes in the composition of the board and behavior of board members. To the extent that a governor has authority to make board appointments, this may be one of his or her strongest means for influencing the quality of the state's higher education system.

Table II. Authority of State Boards of Higher Education, 1986

Consolidated Governing Board		Coordinating Boards						Planning Agencies
Board for All Public Institutions	Board for All Senior Institutions -- Separate Agency for Community Colleges	With Program Approval Authority			With Program Review and Recommendation Authority Only			
		Consolidated or Aggregated Budget (a)	Budget Review and Recommendation (b)	No Statutory Budget Role	Consolidated or Aggregated Budget (a)	Budget Review and Recommendation	No Statutory Budget Role or Program Approval	
Alaska Georgia Hawaii Idaho* Maine** Massachusetts Montana Nevada* North Dakota Rhode Island South Dakota Utah West Virginia	Arizona Florida* Iowa Kansas Mississippi New Hampshire+ North Carolina Oregon Wyoming Wisconsin++	Alabama Connecticut Illinois Maryland New Jersey Ohio Oklahoma So. Carolina	Colorado Indiana Kentucky Louisiana Missouri Pennsylvania* Tennessee Texas Virginia Washington	New York*	Arkansas Florida**	Alaska+ California* Michigan* Minnesota New Mexico Oregon+	New Hampshire+	Delaware Nebraska Vermont

(a) Separate institutional budgets may be included in consolidated or aggregated budgets.  
 (b) Several boards develop the formula on the basis of which allocations are made to institutions.  
 \*States with agency responsible for all levels of education.  
 \*\*Maine Maritime Academy and Vocational-Technical Institutes are under other boards.  
 +Separate statutory coordinating agency.  
 ++State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education is separate from Board of Regents.

Source: Education Commission of the States

Coordination versus Consolidated Governance

A frequently asked question is this: Has there been any discernible trend toward single statewide consolidated governing boards such as were adopted in North Carolina and Wisconsin in the early '70s and in Massachusetts in 1980? In most of the states that have undergone major reorganization in recent years, the option of a single governing board has been considered along with a variety of other options. What may be most significant is that in the 15 or more states where this option has been considered in the past 10 years, it has been adopted in only one. In all others, the choice has been to retain but strengthen an existing coordinating mechanism while maintaining a separate system of institutional governance.

Despite differences in formal authority, both coordinating boards and consolidating governing boards have been criticized by governors and legislators in a number of states because of a tendency to focus on administrative, ministerial, or internal governance issues and to give insufficient attention to the difficult policy issues facing the state. What these states appear to be seeking is not necessarily more centralized governance or strong regulatory control but more effective policy leadership from the state's higher education board (Glenny, 1985).

Lessons from Previous Reorganizations

An analysis of state higher education reorganization efforts over the past decade suggests that state and institutional leaders should think carefully about a number of points before embarking upon major changes. They should:

*Have a vision of the future of higher education in the state and a clear definition of the obstacles to achieving that vision, whether they be leadership, resources, governance, or other problems.* Change may be justified if the existing structure and its leadership have not articulated such a vision and played an effective role in helping the governor, legislature, and higher education community address the central issues. Yet improvements in the current structure and options other than reorganization may be more effective solutions to the states' problems.

*See organizational structure and reorganization as means rather than ends in themselves.* Following from the previous point, more than a few states have embarked on reorganization without a deliberate effort to identify and clarify the real issues facing the state. For example, bills proposing governance changes without strong, substantive arguments for why the changes are necessary can lead to endless debates about power relationships and "the number of boxes on the chart."

*Examine the total higher education policy process, not just the formal higher education structure.* In a number of states, the focus has been on the authority and functions of single agencies or groups of state-level boards without thorough consideration of the roles played by the governor, legislature, and executive and legislative branch staffs. Also important are the formal and informal relationships that make up the state higher education policy process. It is not uncommon for one state to attempt to adopt another state's structure without considering these other points.

*Recognize that there is no perfect system, no preferred model.* State coordination of higher education is perhaps the most complex balancing act in state government. Conflicting interests are the reality. State interests are not the same as institutional interests, and despite assertions to the contrary, state interests are not simply the sum of the interests of all the institutions in the state. An effective structure is one that draws these conflicting interests together in a way that differences and tensions are resolved before they erupt into major political controversies.

#### CONCERNS FOR THE NEXT DECADE

Several points emerge as consistent themes in the major state studies and higher education reorganization efforts of the past year or so:

*Increasing need for more effective state policy leadership.* This is reflected in calls for actions by state boards and their executives as well as institutional leaders to set forth a vision for how higher education can contribute to the state's future, raise the level of the state's aspiration for the quality of its higher education system, and pursue strategies that will resolve longstanding policy dilemmas. Blue ribbon commissions, special gubernatorial initiatives, and proposals for reorganization are often motivated by efforts to give the system a sense of purpose and direction. The existing literature on state coordination and governance is not especially helpful to states seeking new, creative approaches.

*Continuing interest in decentralization and deregulation.* A countervailing tendency to the interest in stronger state policy leadership is the continuing interest, motivated by trends in the private sector and other governmental arenas, in decentralization and deregulation. Options either already adopted by some states or under consideration by others include:

- *Increasing recognition of importance of institutional governing boards.* Actions include: efforts to improve the quality of gubernatorial appointments to governing boards; encouraging greater participation of board members in training programs; and increased delegation to boards of management responsibilities previously controlled by one or more state agencies. Also related to this are conscious efforts to establish conditions that are conducive to attracting, retaining, and rewarding effective college and university presidents (AGB, 1980; Kerr, 1984, 1986).

- *Increasing financial management flexibility for institutions.* The most extensive changes involve a significant reduction in the number of line items in the state budget and delegation of extensive authority to institutions for shifting of funds among programs and accounts, for carryover of funds at the end of the fiscal year, and for retaining and investing institutional revenues. In other states, detailed procedural controls in areas such as purchasing and personnel previously handled by executive branch agencies have been delegated to institutions.

- *Promoting institutional renewal through a combination of decentralized governance and increased use of incentives (changes in the base funding systems as well as new competitive categorical grant programs).* These and other changes reflect a growing awareness of the limitations of traditional state fiscal and regulatory controls and an interest in exploring new policy tools aimed at stimulating effective decentralized management and a creative, "bottom-up" renewal within higher education. Deliberate attempts are being made to balance two approaches. On the one hand, centralized improvements will be made in strategic planning and resolution of major policy coordination issues. On the other hand, institutional renewal will be promoted through decentralized management and increased use of incentives rather than traditional policy directives and regulations (Ewell, 1985).

*Continuing attention to mission differentiation and ways to encourage diversity.* Issues regarding mission differentiation are certainly not new. What is apparent, however, is that despite the best efforts of state coordinating and governing bodies, the politics and basic incentive structures of state systems seem to lead to uniformity and encourage institutions to aspire to a single rather than multiple definitions of excellence and prestige. An underlying issue in several of the recent state studies has been a perception that the existing systems of finance and governance (including multicampus universities) have tended to spread limited resources uniformly among institutions rather than target resources in ways that respect and encourage diverse institutional missions.

The complexity and intensity of the state government's relations with higher education over the next decade will demand new and creative solutions. What worked in the past may not be adequate today. State and institutional leaders share responsibility for ensuring that mechanisms are established to resolve major conflicts while advancing essential values and interests of both the states and higher education.

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Table III on page 2059 displays the consolidated systems of higher education (opposed to multi-campus universities) which have been published annually in GRAPEVINE. This adapted version of the consolidated systems table includes the 23 "consolidated governing boards" in Table II by McGuinness as well as nine consolidated systems which receive \$100,000,000 or more in appropriations, adapted from earlier GRAPEVINE tables on consolidated systems of higher education. (See for instance, GRAPEVINE (January-February 1985), Table 83, page 1992.)

Table I-1. APPROPRIATIONS OF STATE TAX FUNDS FOR OPERATING EXPENSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THIRTY-TWO STATE BOARDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, FISCAL YEARS 1975-76, 1983-84, AND 1985-86, WITH PERCENTAGES OF GAIN OVER TWO AND TEN YEARS (In thousands of dollars)

Institutions (1)	Year 1975-1976 (2)	Year 1983-1984 (3)	Year 1985-1986 (4)	2-yr gain per cent (5)	10-yr gain per cent (6)
Board for All Public Institutions					
Massachusetts Regents	209,386	541,566	711,102	31	240
State U System of Georgia*	254,351	555,407	658,077	18	159
U of Wisconsin System	279,801	495,999	542,457	9	94
Utah Brd of Higher Educ	88,132	198,483	249,399	26	183
University of Alaska	52,973	218,167	235,757	8	345**
W Virginia Brd of Regents	110,960	199,319	233,057	17	110
University of Hawaii	95,231	181,560	208,636	15	119
N Dakota Brd of Higher Educ	48,864	109,632	124,430	13	155
Idaho State Board of Educ	61,558	101,107	121,835	21	98
Rhode Island Brd of Governors	47,801	97,590	110,416	13	131
Montana University System	44,665	103,323	104,974	2	135
University of Nevada System	37,719	75,360	94,410	25	150
University of Maine***	38,367	61,853	82,199	33	114
So Dakota Brd of Regents	35,294	53,353	61,971	16	76
Board of All Senior Institutions--Separate Agency for Community Colleges					
Governors, U of No Carolina	276,686	641,177	814,565	27	194
State U System of Florida	253,890	617,470	758,083	23	199
Arizona Board of Regents	135,596	293,755	374,932	28	177
Kansas Board of Regents	141,919	279,048	317,355	14	124
Iowa Board of Regents	136,891	276,196	295,315	7	116
Miss Inst of Higher Learning	112,885	226,327	291,505	29	158
Oregon Brd of Higher Educ	121,235	212,897	243,836	15	101
University of Wyoming	28,583	71,757	75,194	5	163
U System of New Hampshire	18,454	34,249	40,900	19	122
Consolidated Systems Receiving \$100,000,000 or more					
Trustees, SUNY	707,188	1,069,644	1,253,814	17	77
California State University	497,509	949,984	1,245,870	31	150
City University of New York+	190,150	401,365	447,758	12	135
Penn State University Sys	159,214	235,053	268,156	14	68
Tenn State U's & Comm Colls	83,338	187,993	250,436	33	201
LA State Colls and U's	80,871	173,148	189,217	9	134
Illinois Board of Regents	77,935	126,675	147,600	17	89
Illinois Board of Governors	66,336	115,042	134,000	16	102
Minnesota State U System	58,634	103,819	118,392	14	102
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,552,416</b>	<b>9,008,318</b>	<b>10,805,648</b>		
<b>Weighted percentages of gain</b>				<b>20</b>	<b>137</b>

\*Does not include DeKalb College which is a local community colleges that receives state aid.

\*\*May be overstated because the 1985-86 total contains some items not reported in 1975-76.

\*\*\*Does not include appropriations to the Maritime Academy and vocational institutes.

+The case could be made that CUNY should be considered to be a multi-campus university because of its historical evolution from the City College of New York, but due to similarities in structure and governance with other consolidated systems, CUNY is placed in this table.

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