



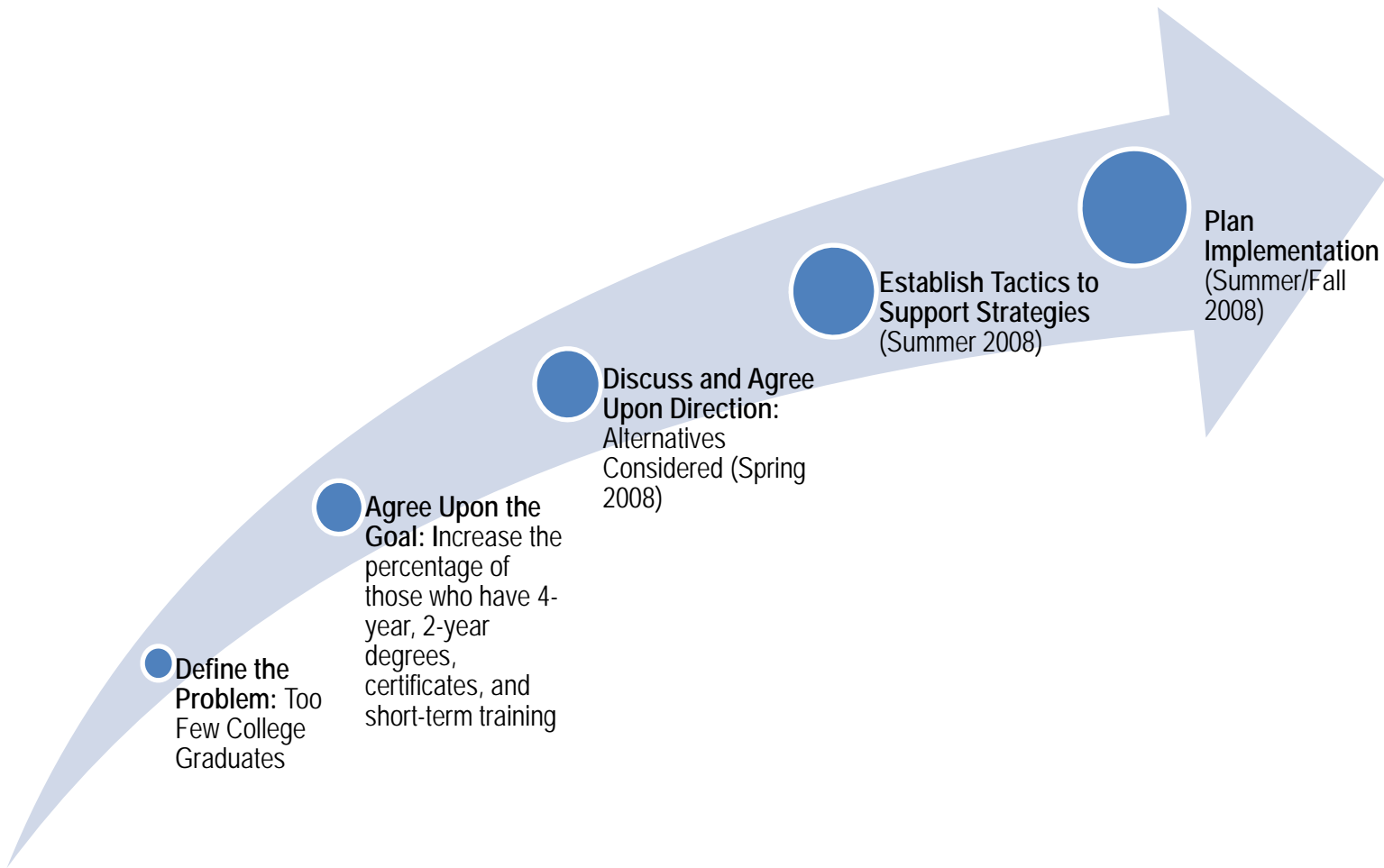
2008 Planning Meeting

Compilation Report

Utah and the nation are facing a decline in the number of individuals who hold certificates and degrees. The State Board of Regents has become more educated on this issue and has agreed to address the problem through identified themes and strategies. Those, plus next steps are included in this compilation report.

March 20, 2008

2008 Planning Meeting Process



Defining the Problem

Too few students persist through their college educations to their educational goals. Utah System of Higher Education statistics show 65 percent of four-year degree seeking freshmen and 55 percent of associate-degree seeking freshmen continue to their second year.

The Goal

There is broad agreement among the Regents that the momentum needs to be changed to increase retention and participation. A 61 percent college graduation rate for Utah by 2025 has been recommended in the national publication “Adding it Up.” It is necessary to gather more information to establish what the proper and realistic goal is for Utah. A shorter term goal may be better. The goal should include certificates, associate and bachelor degree completion.

Factors to take into account are:

- Relying on good student-tracking data and taking into account the state’s demographics
- Taking the changing economy into account
- Being responsive to the market demand for jobs
- Including the larger community in the discussion, particularly economic development leaders

Student Insights

Five students who are working their way through college gave candid insights about their experiences. Several had “stopped out” and returned. All acknowledged that having enough money to attend was a serious factor impeding their completion. Common reasons they were unprepared for college attendance included lack of academic preparation and lack of adult guidance towards and during higher education. They could see long term and have realized that completing their degree was a key to attaining a better income. Their suggestions fell under the theme that the college experience be more student centric and specifically included: more accessible financial aid, easier navigation of the choices and the “system,” better academic and emotional preparedness, accessible and quality high school and college advising, a more work-friendly class schedule, and providing access to classes in the student’s intended major in the freshman and sophomore years.

Common Themes from Discussion Groups

- Strengthen the K-16 Alliance
 - Improve communication and engagement among partners (the State Board of Regents, the State Board of Education, the State Office of Education, the Governor's Office, and the State Legislature).
 - Provide institutions with regular updates and information.
 - Place K-16 progress updates on Regents' and State Board of Education agendas.
- Become more student centric
 - Improve and increase advising, counseling, mentoring and caring
 - Increase the numbers of advisors and high school counselors.
 - Improve high school counseling.
 - Advise holistically
 - Focus on minorities.
 - Don't forget the college sophomores.
 - Take into account Utah's unique culture/environment.
 - Have more flexible schedules (class offerings).
 - Integrate technology (course delivery).
 - Improve delivery and integration of General Education.
- Increase preparation/participation
 - Consider raising the admissions standards at each institution.
 - Increase the number of students taking rigorous courses in high school.
 - Help high school students to "see" themselves as college students.
- Increase financial assistance
 - Regents make this a priority in annual budget requests.
 - Go beyond need-based aid.
- Improve data
 - There is a need for accurate and consistent system-wide data.
 - Make the data transparent and public.
 - Report consistently and annually.

Additional Observations

- There are programs that could be put in place to assist young married families to be able to participate in higher education. Subsidized daycare for mothers to attend programs scheduled between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- Mentoring programs for students, particularly minorities.
 - Better connect students to faculty and the campus.
 - Create opportunities for high school students to visit college campuses.
- Make student preparation and financial aid policy (i.e. Regents' Scholarship, etc.) a top priority.
- Simplify and streamline student financial aid programs (specifically scholarships).

- Regents should encourage and allow institutional flexibility.
- Increase participation among Latinos and non-traditional students.
- Increase participation of students who are not making the transition between high school and college—we are now 48th in the nation for the rate of students coming directly from high school to college.
- Pursue system incentives for graduates v. enrollments.
- Mandate the ACT for all high school students coupled with Plan and Explore.
- Every campus should provide job information and placement (including those external to campus).
- The system should look internally and potentially reprioritize financial resources.

Next Steps

During breakout sessions on March 20, 2008, the State Board of Regents identified “Common Themes” to be pursued as key strategies. The next step is for USHE staff to further research and evaluate the strategy options for budget and policy implications, relevance, social equity, and political feasibility.

This fall, the Commissioner’s Office will report these findings to the Board of Regents for further action.