

Quality and Value Discussion – Engineers’ Club, Dayton Thursday, Dec. 12, 2013

A group representing 13 colleges and universities in the Dayton area joined Chancellor John Carey and Dr. Gordon Gee for the third in a series of statewide meetings to discuss the new Quality and Value initiative.

Chancellor Carey and Dr. Gee welcomed the group and thanked everyone for contributing to the discussion and the work being done to bring better quality and value to higher education in Ohio. Chancellor Carey called the Engineers’ Club “an appropriate place to have this meeting and be on the hunt for innovation.” Dr. Gee said higher education is a top priority in Ohio, but “new money is not our forte; it will be how we can better use our resources. We have the most forward-reaching approach to funding higher education in the country, but we have to do what we’ve never been asked to do, which is increase quality in a much more moderate way. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we’re trying to hear all of the good ideas and discuss the options.”

After welcoming remarks, Chancellor Carey and Dr. Gee opened the floor to attendees to share comments and ideas during the 90-minute discussion. Some of the comments shared by those in attendance are as follows:

“I’d like to introduce something that is an old idea – the PSEO model of encouraging high school students to begin their college experience while they are in high school. If I was a superintendent today I’d be much more aggressive about pushing my students to do college-level work. In Ohio 40 percent of our high school grads need remediation; that means 60 percent are college ready. We could be more aggressive as a state in setting some goals where each high school student earns some college credit before leaving high school. The reason that has not grown is the funding structure, so we have to simplify that structure.”

“Because of my PSEO experience I chose to make education my career and lifelong profession. There is obviously a financial advantage and it really accelerated my education. We have to make sure students are aware of the actual opportunity.”

“From 2000 to 2011, Ohio household income dropped 20.4 percent, and that has had an impact on the students we thought could maneuver the financial gaps associated with higher ed. We are having to address those students not completely covered by the Pell Grant, and middle income families can't afford that gap anymore. If we are going to sustain the basis for middle income families, the financial formula must be reexamined. As we begin to talk about efficiency of operations, it is important to attach the value.”

“It’s very hard on some students to take out loans because they are middle class or low income students. Students need to be aware of what assistance is out there.”

“In South Carolina there are six different state aid programs and three merit-based programs. In the 2011-12 academic year, 44,000 students received \$250 million in financial aid. Many of those

students are likely to stay in state. We must see what we can do to make merit-based aid available and look at our need-based programs.”

“Competency-based learning is something we started looking at 100 years ago. Now it's deja vu all over again – we are asking what value does competency based education add? There is a fairly significant group going around the country that Gates and Lumina are putting together and there is some real clear thinking around this. I would suggest that Ohio specifically look at that.”

“Many of our institutions have had a lot of success with cooperative opportunities and internships. Education is extremely valuable – let’s continue to look at internships and cooperative education.”

“We are obsessed with rankings. The value proposition for students and families is one thing, and for the state it’s another. I hope we don't just piddle around the edges and not get to the heart of what it looks like around the world. If we can't find ways to get middle income kids to the finish line, this whole effort is going to be wasted. We have to define what we mean by quality, and we have to move the quality conversation to include experiences and outcomes.”

Dr. Gee said higher education institutions have “fundamentally deferred on the issue of changing our culture. There are so many things we ought to be talking about. We reward and recognize our faculty in a Byzantine way. We ought to reward people for great teaching. We should be about creativity and the cultivation of ideas. We are based on the premise of curiosity but have no interest in the curiosity of how to make ourselves better.”

“It would help us to know where we stand today. We need a clear baseline of where we are in terms of the tax burden on Ohioans vs. nation, tuition levels vs. nation, etc. On the quality side, where are our completers, what is our enrollment index? We need to have a common starting place so when we do a better job, we will know it.”

“There is often a situation where we end up competing with one another and chasing after the same students to recreate the same experiences on our campuses. If institution X has the best foreign language system, why wouldn't we share in that? We should establish shared programs and opportunities.”

“The future of our country rests on the ability to provide access to everybody to a higher education. As we defund higher ed, other countries are building on our model. We need to take a look at metrics surrounding access, not just analyzing with regard to ‘how many students did you graduate,’ but ‘how many with a higher or lower metric value?’ Not all students are created equal at the beginning, and we have to make sure we can get them to the end.”

“Jobs and economic development have been left out of the conversation. It is not ‘if,’ it is ‘when’ the federal government will disperse financial aid based on your zip code and major. That is what will happen in terms of how majors are selected.”

Dr. Gee responded by saying, “The endgame for all of this is about jobs. We are trying to keep the best and brightest here. We want to open the gates to let the best and brightest come here, and then close the gate behind them. We have to have a brain gain, not a brain drain.”

“Ensuring that students are involved in the community will help them develop a connection to Ohio as a whole. When I went to Wright State, the first thing I noticed was the community – ease of access, how the university was engaging me, and how I could give back. This was our first year hosting a dance marathon for the Children's Miracle Network. We raised \$50,000, and the university was so supportive. I would also like to see high school be about research and development, and structured how college is. R&D provides skills everybody can use.”

Chancellor Carey and Dr. Gee concluded the meeting by assuring attendees that the discussion will continue, and encouraged everyone to provide additional ideas as they have them.

“This is very helpful,” Dr. Gee said. “This is a very transparent process, and there is no secret elixir in the middle drawer. We are hunting for a lot of ideas; we want to create a cafeteria of ideas and let people pick and choose, and we can't allow ourselves to let this opportunity pass.”