



Framework for Setting Priorities

The Postsecondary Team’s goals were:

- Promoting economic development and innovation
- Raising overall educational attainment and
- Monitoring and funding results.

The overarching goals in the team come primarily from the State’s Strategic Master Plan for higher education. Progress towards the goals in the plan will never be even or smooth, but the focus on long-term goals helps avoid panic/complacency in the face of short- to medium-term changes in appropriations.

The following criteria were used by the team to inform specific priorities.

1) Progress towards greater and more equitable attainment

We understand we can’t always make progress towards our goals, but if the funding is available, we must make progress on the attainment goal.

Our indicator shows that we’ve made only limited progress in the past 10 years. We change that by fundamentally altering expectations among underserved populations. We want working adults to utilize the training system, and we want more high school graduates to enroll in college.

A realistic look at the revenue forecast led us to prioritize the system we have (to the degree possible)

before adding new programs, but the top priorities remain instruction and financial assistance. The sheer size of many of the activities do not lend themselves to more targeted allocation decisions, so examining performance in greater detail is a discussion we need to have with each sector of the system.

2) Recognize the diversity of our sectors and their missions

The 2- and 4-year sectors of higher education do not have the same mission, and thus they prioritize different functions.

We tried to respect the open-access mission of the community and technical colleges, though we understand that this openness, if it is coupled with funding cuts, could impact the system adversely. We have tried to respect the four-year system’s goal of making progress on per-student funding benchmarks, though if this priority is coupled with cuts, it will impact access. In both cases, the sectors believe they will be better able to take advantage of growth when state revenues improve.

3) Impact on innovation and workforce

Basic and applied research at UW and WSU create new firms and industries, and the institutions have continually leveraged a small amount of state funds to create a multi-billion dollar economic engine. In addition, job skills training helps Washington maintain



and grow a highly competitive workforce. Certificated training produces large wage gains at low cost to the state and student, and helps new industries train the workers they need, when they need them. These activities produce a fantastic return on investment, and we have tried to preserve as much of them as we can.

Highlights of the priority plan

The purchase plan reflects the group’s intention to preserve the core functions of each sector.

The highest priorities include:

- Research/Sponsored research

Largely funded through federal grants, these activities produce a tremendous return on investment, and spin-off technologies and firms based upon technologies and innovations developed on our campuses have helped shape our state. From health care to precision agriculture, these activities add billions to our economy.

- Workforce training

A flexible, competitive workforce is the logical partner to innovation and research. We can’t easily commercialize new technologies (or at least, firms can’t do so in Washington) without skilled workers. Please note that over \$16 million in incumbent worker training is included as part of the economic vitality result team.

- Preserving facilities

This plan is about balancing long-term goals with short-term realities. We must ensure that the system is focused on long term goals and able to make rapid progress towards them once the economy improves. If cuts are necessary, we cannot afford to let our facilities crumble, creating expensive problems four or five years out. Demographic projections tell us that several years of flat growth in the college age population are headed our way. Instead of building capacity for those students, we need to focus limited resources on instructing them.

- Preserve the State Need Grant (SNG)

One of the most flexible and largest state aid programs in the country, SNG reduces barriers to access to virtually all types of education and training. From helping poor high school graduates attend UW to helping a working parent attend a private career school, the program helps over 70,000 students get the education and training they need. We created a separate activity for this program to highlight that it is the most important aid program in the state, and that we would reduce other aid programs before touching SNG.

Challenges of the purchase plan:

- Size and make-up of the activities do not allow for targeted, evidence-based purchase decisions.
- Difficulty aligning activities to performance data