

# CHANGING DIRECTION:



Integrating Higher Education  
Financial Aid and Financing Policy

## Linking Tuition and Financial Aid Policy: The Gubernatorial Perspective

October 2004

WICHE



Supported by a grant from Lumina Foundation for Education



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The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a public, interstate agency established to promote and facilitate resource sharing, collaboration, and cooperative planning among the Western states and their colleges and universities. Member states are:

Alaska	Idaho	Oregon
Arizona	Montana	South Dakota
California	Nevada	Utah
Colorado	New Mexico	Washington
Hawaii	North Dakota	Wyoming

WICHE's broad objectives are to:

- Strengthen educational opportunities for students through expanded access to programs.
- Assist policymakers in dealing with higher education and human resource issues through research and analysis.
- Foster cooperative planning, especially that which targets the sharing of resources.

This publication was prepared by the Policy Analysis and Research unit, which is involved in the research, analysis, and reporting of information on public policy issues of concern in the WICHE states.

This report is available free of charge online at [www.wiche.edu/Policy/Changing\\_Direction/Pubs.asp](http://www.wiche.edu/Policy/Changing_Direction/Pubs.asp).

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Most importantly, we would like to thank the governors' education policy advisors and other representatives of the governors' offices for their time, opinions, knowledge, and expertise on the important higher education financing issues that are facing students, states, and the nation.

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October 2004





## ▀ Foreword

As state economies are beginning to recover from the past several years of constrained revenues, state policymakers and higher education leaders continue to grapple with how to finance higher education and provide student financial aid in a way that increases access and success for all students. The policymaking and education communities are in a constant struggle with how to meet growing system and student needs through state appropriations, how to ensure shared and equitable responsibility for paying for higher education, and how best to use subsidies, such as financial aid, to expand access, choice, and opportunity. Too often, these issues are dealt with as separate and discreet questions rather than reflecting the interrelated nature of both higher education financial aid and finance policies, as well as the interconnected nature of state and federal efforts in these areas.

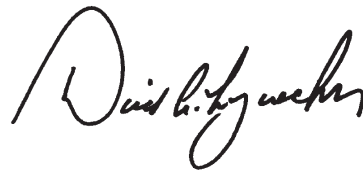
Funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, the *Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policy* project at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) examines how to structure financial aid and financing policies and practices to maximize participation, access, and success for all students and to promote more informed decisionmaking on issues surrounding financial aid and financing in higher education. Over a multi-year period, the project is exploring the socioeconomic-political environment in order to foster the kinds of major changes needed in the near future at multiple levels - campus, system, state, and national - and to initiate and promote those changes through public policy.

This survey of governor's education policy advisors was commissioned as part of *Changing Direction* and as a companion piece to a previously published survey, *Linking Tuition and Financial Aid Policy: The State Legislative Perspective*. These two publications collectively are designed to provide insight into the perspectives of key state policymakers, and

this survey specifically is intended to contribute to the existing base of knowledge by examining the perceptions of governors and their advisors about critical decisions and their role in higher education financing policy. Exploring their viewpoint will hopefully lead to better, more informed decisions on these important issues.

WICHE's three major collaborating partners in the *Changing Direction* project – the American Council on Education (ACE), the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) – have contributed immeasurably to the success of this project. ACE's Center for Policy Analysis and SHEEO have long-standing reputations for high-quality work on a wide range of issues, with a history of specializing in financial aid and financing issues. NCSL, a national, bipartisan organization, provides additional expertise concerning the state legislative role in creating integrated higher education policy. The participation of each of these organizations has enriched WICHE's efforts to help states and institutions *change direction*, and we are greatly indebted to them for their hard work and exceptional contributions to this effort.

WICHE is most grateful to Lumina Foundation for Education, a private, independent foundation that strives to help people reach their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school, for its generous support of this project. Without their assistance and encouragement, this project would not be possible.



David A. Longanecker  
Executive Director  
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## ▀ Executive Summary

Governors recognize that maintaining and expanding college access, affordability, and completion is critical to state economic competitiveness. State financing of higher education is the governor's critical lever for improving statewide postsecondary attainment rates. With the state share of funding for higher education having decreased in recent years, states can more efficiently use tax dollars by coordinating tuition and financial aid policies.<sup>1</sup>

This survey of governors' policy advisors examines the extent to which governors perceive and value coordinated public tuition-setting and student financial assistance policies. Thirty-one governors' offices responded to a telephone survey in late spring 2004. Findings from these surveys will contribute to the policy development and technical assistance provided through *Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policy*, a major national project supported by Lumina Foundation for Education.

The survey's central finding is that policy coordination, while desirable to governors, does not occur. Further, it is difficult to achieve because of a diffusion of authority between governors, state legislators, state and system-level governing boards, and institutions.

The survey finds that decisionmaking responsibility for higher education finance is diffused between

key state-level actors. Governors tend to play an influential but not a decisionmaking role in tuition and student financial assistance policies; system-level governing boards tend to exert the most authority. Further, governors' offices report weak or no policy oversight in linking the three major strands of higher education finance: tuition, financial aid (need- and merit-based), and institutional support. As a result, they perceive that the policymaking process is inefficient and does not allow maximum input from parents and students. This finding is consistent with governors' increasing interest in protecting consumers from steep tuition increases they cannot afford.

Governors' offices predict continued competition for limited state resources, with tuition increases likely. In an era of higher tuition at public colleges and universities, governors cite the increasing importance of financial aid policies and performance-based institutional funding. Governors want to find ways to bridge the gap between the current policy process for higher education funding and the coordination that is needed to protect college affordability for low- and moderate-income students and families. The analytic tools of the *Changing Direction* project and other Lumina Foundation – sponsored research can help bridge this gap.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, governors may need to strengthen their statewide capacity to oversee higher education financing policies.



## ▀ Introduction

In 2004, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) commissioned the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) to create and administer a survey of governors' education policy advisors. Specifically, the NGA Center and WICHE were interested in governors' perspectives on critical higher education financing issues, including the extent to which public tuition-setting and student financial assistance policies are coordinated.

The survey is part of a major project, *Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policy*, supported by Lumina Foundation for Education. WICHE is partnering with three organizations - the American Council on Education's (ACE) Center for Policy Analysis, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) – to examine how to structure financial aid and financing policies and practices to maximize participation, access, and success for all students. Designed around an integrated approach to restructuring appropriations, tuition, and financial aid policies and practices, WICHE's overarching goal is better, more informed decisionmaking on issues related to financial aid and financing in higher education. Over a multiyear period, the project is examining the socioeconomic-political environment in order to foster the kinds of major changes needed in the near future at multiple levels - campus, system, state, and national - and to initiate and promote those changes through public policy.

In addition to national and multistate regional policy forums, roundtables, commissioned papers, and other activities, *Changing Direction* provides direct technical assistance to a limited number of states. Through a competitive process, 10 states - Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon, and

Tennessee - have been selected to receive technical assistance to explore and implement innovative ways of improving the policymaking framework at the state level. Governors' offices are key players in the higher education policymaking process. Thus, their insights contribute significantly to the overall work of this project.

The NGA Center surveyed governors' education policy advisors or their designees to:

- Understand how governors' offices view their role, and the role of other key stakeholders, in the higher education policymaking process.
- Assess their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the process.
- Identify the level of coordination between their tuition and financial aid policymaking.
- Learn more about future policy priorities.
- Compare the perspectives of governors and state legislators.

## ▀ The Importance of Policy Coordination and Alignment

Effective postsecondary policies and efficient use of public support for higher education has never been more important. Four out of 10 new jobs created over the next decade will require at least an associate's degree; these jobs also pay better wages. Due to growth in high-skilled jobs and retiring baby boomers, experts predict a shortage of *at least* 10 million workers with some postsecondary education.<sup>3</sup>

Governors and other state policymakers have a number of levers to improve postsecondary outcomes. State-level financing for higher education is a significant public policy lever. Most public colleges and universities receive the majority of their unrestricted operating revenues from only

two sources - the state and students. State-level financing policies for higher education focus on the overall level of general operating funds for institutions, tuition and fees policies, state student financial aid, and institutional student financial aid. A coherent and comprehensive integration of these policies can help temper tuition increases for students from low- and moderate-income families, who are most likely to not enroll, reduce their course loads, or drop out when prices increase. Similarly, integrated policies can strengthen institutions' capacity to fulfill their missions.

The implications of unaligned state-level financing policies for higher education include a reduction in college affordability; a duplication of federal, state, and institutional efforts; and reductions in access and quality (e.g., enrollment caps, elimination of classes, increases in class size, and fewer academic support services). In a related paper commissioned for *Changing Direction*, Dennis Jones, president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, notes several examples of how different objectives for financing policies and different roles in the decision process can have counterproductive results:

- In an effort to constrain expenses, states reduce student aid funding - or fail to sufficiently increase it - to keep pace with rapidly rising tuitions.
- Student financial aid is administered as fee waivers, which makes recipients ineligible for federal tuition tax credits.
- States fail to intentionally integrate federal Pell grants into the state need formula.
- Tuition levels are held well below what most students can afford, which reduces the resources institutions need to increase enrollment capacity and provide students with a high-quality education.<sup>4</sup>

Even as state budgets rebound, state policymakers need to examine how to leverage available

funds in ways that improve productivity and increase postsecondary access and success rates. Coordination of the major state-level financing policies is one strategy states can pursue.

## ■ Survey Overview

The NGA Center surveyed governors' education policy advisors or their designees to:

- Understand how governors' offices view their role and the role of other key stakeholders in the higher education policymaking process.
- Assess their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the process.
- Identify the level of coordination between their tuition and financial aid policymaking.
- Learn more about future policy priorities.
- Compare the perspectives of governors to state legislators' perspectives.

The survey instrument was modeled after one used by NCSL entitled *Linking Tuition and Financial Aid Policy: The State Legislative Perspective* (see Appendix A).<sup>5</sup> The NGA Center worked with WICHE to adjust the NCSL survey to fit the purpose of this new study.

The NGA Center sent an e-mail message to governors' education policy advisors in 50 states requesting their participation in the study (see Appendix B). The message provided background information about *Changing Direction* and the NGA Center's role in the project; asked advisors to expect a telephone call from an NGA Center interviewer; assured anonymity of responses; and offered advisors a summary of the survey results and the final report.

Interviews were conducted in May and June 2004. Thirty-one states completed the survey, producing a response rate of 62 percent.<sup>6</sup> In three states, the education policy advisor requested that a colleague

in a state agency respond to the interview, and the responses are included in the analysis.<sup>7</sup>

This report summarizes aggregate responses of governors’ offices. Because the governors’ education policy advisors were promised anonymity, this report does not include state-level data, attribute any responses to a specific state, or list the individuals who responded to the survey. In addition, rounding may cause some figures to add up to 101 percent.

## ▲ The Respondents

The following states responded to the survey: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

A little over one-half of those interviewed (16 respondents) work for a Democratic governor. The other 15 respondents work for a Republican governor. Survey respondents represented governors whose tenure in office ranged from six months to nine years. The median number of years in office for a governor was one- and one-half years. All major geographic regions are represented in the sample.

Survey respondents represented a wide cross-section of advisors to governors on higher education policy. Interviewees included chiefs of staff, secretaries of education, general counsels, budget officers, state higher education executive officers and governors’ education policy advisors.

## ▲ A Description of Survey Responses

Tables 1-7 report survey responses. As previously mentioned, responses are not broken down by state or by other characteristics of the advisors or the governors they serve. In a few instances, not all advisors answered a question, finding it not applicable to their state or difficult to answer. The percentages reported in the tables may therefore add up to less than 100 percent when this is the case.

### ***Governors’ Roles in the Higher Education Policy Process***

Governors’ education policy advisors were asked first to describe the role of five primary policymakers or policymaking bodies involved in setting tuition and student financial aid policies: the governor, the legislature, the state higher education agency, the individual system governing board(s), and the individual institutions. Tables 1 and 2 report these results.

**Table 1. The Role of Primary Policymakers in Establishing Tuition Policy**

*Describe the role of each of the following individuals or entities in establishing tuition policy in your state.*

	Significant Role	Some Role	No Role/ Not Applicable
Governor	24%	48%	28%
Legislature	24%	52%	24%
State higher education agency	41%	38%	21%
Individual system governing board	76%	7%	17%
Individual institutions	52%	41%	7%

**Table 2. The Role of Primary Policymakers in Establishing State Student Financial Aid Policy**

*Describe the role of each of the following individuals or entities in establishing policies dealing with state student financial aid.*

	Significant Role	Some Role	No Role/ Not Applicable
Governor	41%	59%	0%
Legislature	52%	48%	0%
State higher education agency	45%	41%	14%
Individual system governing board	38%	31%	31%
Individual institutions	41%	48%	10%

Overall, governors’ education policy advisors report that governors have more of an influencing role than a decisionmaking role in setting tuition and student financial aid policies. Advisors perceive that individual system governing boards have the most significant role in formulating tuition policies, and state legislators have the most significant role in developing financial aid policies.<sup>8</sup> Governors’ offices also recognize that other entities, like state financial aid commissions and state coalitions of independent colleges, play a formal role in establishing financial aid policies.

The next set of questions focused on how governors coordinate policy decisions regarding tuition and student financial assistance policies with the other

four state policy players. Tables 3 and 4 report these results.

There is not a great deal of coordination between governors and the other state policymakers to assure that tuition and financial assistance policies complement one another and support statewide goals such as increased access or college affordability. Not one advisor reports a great deal of coordination between the governor and individual system governing boards and individual institutions to assure that student financial assistance policies work together to meet statewide goals. Only one advisor notes a great deal of coordination between the governor, the legislature, and individual institutions on tuition policies.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 3. Level of Coordination between the Governor and Other Primary Policymakers when Setting Tuition Policy**

*What would you say is the level of coordination between the governor and these other state entities when setting tuition policy?*

	Great Deal of Coordination	Some Coordination	No Coordination/ Not Applicable
Between the governor and the legislature	3%	55%	41%
Between the governor and the state higher education agency	14%	55%	31%
Between the governor and the individual system governing board	10%	45%	45%
Between the governor and the individual institutions	3%	31%	66%



**Table 4. Level of Coordination between the Governor and Other Primary Policymakers when Making Policy Decisions about State Student Financial Assistance**

*What would you say is the level of coordination between the governor and these other state entities when making policy decisions about state student financial assistance?*

	Great Deal of Coordination	Some Coordination	No Coordination/ Not Applicable
Between the governor and the legislature	10%	69%	21%
Between the governor and the state higher education agency	24%	62%	14%
Between the governor and the individual system governing board	0%	55%	45%
Between the governor and the individual institutions	0%	45%	55%

### **Alignment of Policy**

The second section of the survey focused on the degree to which governors’ education policy advisors perceive that tuition policy and student financial aid policies are aligned in their states.

With so many policymaking entities having some role in developing tuition and financial aid policies, states may be more likely to have aligned policies if they have a historical commitment to a particular approach or philosophy. For instance, states with large, independent sectors have higher median tuitions and may have historically embraced - by design or default - a strategy of high tuition and high financial aid to promote college access and completion. Governors’ education policy advisors were asked if their state historically has a philosophy about the relationship between tuition and aid. A majority of respondents report that their states had no prevailing approach or philosophy. Three advisors report that the state had a “high tuition, high aid” philosophy, and two said their states had a “low tuition, low aid” philosophy. Seven advisors report having another tuition/aid philosophy in their states. These responses included:

- High tuition/high financial aid for students enrolled in the public sector and some financial aid for students enrolled in the private sector.
- High tuition/moderate financial aid.
- Low tuition/incremental financial aid.
- Low tuition/moderate financial aid.

Advisors who report that a fundamental state philosophy exists were asked how regularly the philosophy shapes the decisionmaking process. The responses indicate that the philosophy is at least part of the process. Eight advisors indicate that this was “always” a consideration and six report it was “occasionally” a consideration. No advisor indicates that it was “never” a consideration.

At the same time, those who report a fundamental philosophy were asked what state factors influence decisionmaking about tuition and financial aid. Economic factors appear to be extremely important, as they were the most common responses from governors’ offices. Advisors mention:

- “Availability of state funds.”
- “State budget.”
- “State appropriations.”
- “State tax revenue.”
- “Workforce/industry demands.”

“Politics” as well as the policy priorities of “access” and “affordability” were all listed as recurring factors by the advisors. Other items mentioned include:

- “Improving educational attainment.”
- “Private institutions and market sector.”
- “Diversity.”
- “Demographic trends.”

The survey then asked questions about how governors’ offices evaluated their overall state system of policymaking on tuition and student financial aid. Advisors answered a series of questions regarding the outcomes of these policies, and the responses are reported in Table 5.

**Table 5. Overall Policy Process Regarding Tuition and Student Financial Aid**

*I’m going to read you a few statements about the overall policy process in your state regarding tuition and student financial aid.*

	Agree	Disagree	Neither
The process is efficient.	31%	52%	17%
The process allows for flexibility.	66%	14%	21%
The process results in fair policy.	52%	10%	38%
The process results in equitable policy.	41%	21%	38%
The process provides for maximum legislative input.	59%	24%	17%
The process provides for maximum input by students and parents.	21%	52%	28%
The process results in the alignment of tuition and financial aid policy.	28%	45%	28%

Governors’ education policy advisors have mixed judgments about tuition and financial aid policymaking processes. A majority of respondents agree that their state policymaking process allows for flexibility and maximum legislative input and that it results in fairness. In contrast, 55 percent of governors’ advisors do not feel the process is efficient and 52 percent feel there is not maximum

input from parents and students. Governors’ education advisors were also asked specifically about alignment itself. To further explore the question of policy alignment, advisors were asked how much alignment there is between tuition and financial aid policymaking. Table 6 reports these results.

**Table 6. Process in Determining Tuition and Financial Aid Policy**

*What best describes the process in your state when determining tuition and financial aid policy?*

There is a great deal of integration between tuition and financial aid policy decisions.	7%
These decisions are made by different groups at different times.	45%
These are typically completely separate conversations.	31%
Other: There is some integration.	10%
Other: These are sometimes separate conversations.	3%
Other: No Answer.	3%

Most of the governors' advisors indicate that they want critical decisions about how to use state higher education resources to be better integrated; few indicate that they indeed are. Eight out of 10 advisors express a strong desire for better alignment between tuition and financial aid policy, but just 10 percent of advisors indicate a "great deal of integration" actually occurs. Most advisors regard their policymaking processes as discrete decisions made by different groups at different times, and sometimes in completely separate conversations. Some advisors note that the three response categories were too narrow to effectively characterize their states' policymaking processes (see question 11 in Appendix A).

Lastly, this section of the survey investigated whether there were ways states could accomplish better integration between tuition and financial aid policies. Governors' education policy advisors commonly note that communication can improve policymaking and the effective use of limited state resources. Advisors differ on how best to promote common communication and shared goals, particularly when state policymakers have responded to budget cuts by granting tuition-setting authority to campuses. Some governors' offices want to see a clear, statewide agenda for higher education and a common forum for discussing how to collectively accomplish this agenda, such as an education roundtable with all stakeholders, including business and industry. Other education advisors favor consolidating decisionmaking authority under a stronger coordinating board. Many advisors stress the importance of incorporating participation rates and affordability metrics into the decisionmaking process. One advisor notes the importance of making financial aid policy a more explicit priority by including financial aid requests in institutional, system, and state revenue and budget estimates.

## ***Issues Ahead for States***

The final section of the survey assessed current state higher education policy issues. Governors' education policy advisors were asked what issues states would be considering in the short term (the next two to three years). Table 7 illustrates their responses.

The economy is a leading driver of states' higher education policy agendas. Almost all advisors (97 percent) note that their states will debate tuition increases in the short term, and 61 percent will examine decreasing the overall share of the state's budget for higher education.

Related to this, most governors' offices share a high interest in financial aid policies. In a reversal of more recent policy priorities, a much greater percentage of the responding states will consider increasing support for need-based aid rather than increasing funds for merit-based aid (87 versus 52 percent). Nearly three out of four states want to find the "right balance" between need- and merit-based aid programs.

Governors' offices will continue to pursue financing policies with stronger incentives for performance. Ninety percent of the states will consider using appropriations, tuition, and financial aid to promote special initiatives and goals, including improved student transfer and degree completion rates. Another 84 percent will debate how states can create incentives for more efficient growth and cost management; and 77 percent will weigh dual enrollment strategies, such as early colleges, to accelerate students' time-to-degree and reduce state expenditures for higher education. Over one-half of the responding governors' offices intend to develop strategies for improving adult participation in postsecondary education.

**Table 7. Potential Future State Issues**

*For each of the following, please tell me whether you think this will be an issue before the state in the next two to three years.*

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
Decreasing the overall share of the state higher education budget.	62%	28%	10%
Tuition increases.	97%	0%	3%
Limits on in-state tuition (for example, to only four or five years per student).	21%	45%	34%
Differential tuition rates for residents versus nonresidents.	48%	41%	10%
Differential tuition rates for students in different programs (for example, college of education, college of business).	41%	34%	24%
Linking tuition increases to median family incomes, Consumer Price Index, or some other measure of inflation.	28%	24%	48%
Increasing taxes to offset tuition increases.	17%	62%	21%
Increasing need-based student financial aid.	83%	7%	10%
Increasing merit-based student aid.	48%	24%	28%
Finding the right mix of need- versus merit-based aid.	72%	17%	10%
Shifting funds from institutional support to student financial aid programs.	31%	38%	31%
Performance funding for higher education.	52%	24%	24%
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: efficient growth/cost management.	83%	7%	10%
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: student transfer and/or timely degree completion.	90%	7%	3%
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: adult participation.	62%	7%	31%
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: dual enrollment/early colleges.	76%	14%	10%

There are varying degrees of interest among states in allowing for differences in tuition rates. While over one-half (52 percent) plan to discuss differential tuition rates for residents and nonresidents, a smaller percentage (39 percent) will consider differences in tuition rates for various programs. A handful of states (19 percent) will discuss the possibility of time limits for in-state tuition prices (for example, only four or five years per student).

Shifting funds from institutional support to financial aid programs, linking tuition increases to a measure of inflation, and increasing taxes to offset tuition increases are lower priorities for responding governors' offices. Only 32 percent, 29 percent, and 19 percent of states, respectively, indicate they expect to debate these policy issues.

Advisors were asked whether there were other major issues regarding tuition and financial assistance coming before their states in the next two to three years. Their responses include: revisiting state subsidies to public and private universities; increasing tuition tax credits; using financial aid to meet projected workforce needs; and creating or maintaining a state lottery to generate new revenue for financial aid.

Finally, the governors' education advisors were asked if there were any ongoing conversations in their states about creating either a different process for making tuition or financial aid policy. Over one-half (18 respondents) indicate their states are working toward a different tuition policy. Some note that there are broad, working conversations currently taking place in their states through

higher education commissions, roundtables, and foundation projects. Others note specific strategies, including consolidating decisionmaking authority or creating financial aid programs that support roader college readiness. Some of the responses include:

- "Aligning goals and policies to statutes and vice versa."
- "Creating a governing board to establish tuition policy."
- "Restructuring the power and mission of the higher education board."
- "Adjusting tuition rates from a flat fee to a per credit (hourly) basis."
- "Creating a statewide financial aid program."
- "Creating sliding scale tuition fees for the flagship university."
- "Creating a full tuition scholarship to four-year state schools for students who score in the top 25 percentile on the state assessment test."
- "Targeting rural areas with financial aid programs."
- "Altering the structural system of the statewide grant program."

## ► Finding Common Ground: Governors and State Legislators

This report is modeled after a similar NCSL study of state legislators, *Linking Tuition and Financial Aid Policy*. It is useful to compare the perspectives of our respondents and NCSL's and identify potential areas of common ground.

On the whole, governors' offices and state legislators hold similar opinions on the issues surveyed. Both stakeholders recognize a weak level of coordination between themselves and state higher education agencies, system governing boards, and institutions. Governors and state legislators also share a strong desire to more

effectively use resources through better policy alignment.

In addition, the two groups share similar outlooks of future issues. Both predict that decreasing state support for higher education and tuition increases will be upcoming state issues. Interestingly, a significantly smaller percentage of governors' offices identify decreasing the state higher education budget as an issue. Again, this suggests the fiscal outlook of states has improved during the last year. The two stakeholders also foresee the financial aid issues of increasing need- and merit-based aid and finding the right balance between the two financial assistance programs to be future priorities.

State fiscal crises tend to hurt policymakers' ability to abide by a fundamental philosophy regarding the relationship between tuition and financial aid. State legislators report that economic conditions drove decisionmaking more than governors' offices reported. The state legislators, surveyed in late 2002 and early 2003, were facing more difficult financial circumstances than were the governors' advisors, surveyed in spring 2004.

Governors' offices and state legislators differ in parochial ways on how they characterize the policy process. Governors' offices respond that the process allows for maximum legislative input - sometimes at the expense of efficiency and equity - while state legislators disagree that they had opportunities for maximum input.

## ► Analysis of Advisors' Responses

This survey was conducted at a time when state budgets were beginning to rebound, but the overall outlook for higher education remains relatively weak. Most governors' education policy advisors

report that they expect tuitions to rise and the share of state support to decline over the next few years.

The survey's central finding is that policy coordination, while desirable to governors (and state legislators), does not occur. Policy coordination will be difficult to achieve because of a diffusion of authority between governors, state legislators, state and system-level governing boards, and institutions. Governors tend to play an influential but not decisionmaking role in tuition and student financial assistance policies; system-level governing boards tend to exert the most authority. Further, policy coordination is limited by a lack of a guiding philosophy about college affordability. Mirroring what state legislators report, governors' offices do not indicate that the state has a fundamental state philosophy guiding tuition and financial aid policies.

Governors' advisors report weak or no policy oversight linking the three major strands of higher education finance: tuition, financial aid (need- and merit-based), and institutional support. As a result, they perceive that the policymaking process is inefficient and does not allow maximum input from parents and students. This finding is consistent with governors' increasing interest in protecting consumers from steep tuition increases they cannot afford.

Related to this, governors are interested in strategies that can increase state capacity for higher education policy oversight. Some offices think this will require new, centralized governance authority, whereas others are interested in statewide roundtables to review how financing policies impact college attendance and retention for families of different incomes.

Governors' education policy advisors share a strong concern for maintaining and improving college affordability in face of steep tuition increases.

This concern is reflected in their support for need-based financial aid, their desire to find a better balance between need- and merit-based financial aid policies, and their willingness to identify new sources of money for financial aid. The heightened interest in statewide student financial aid programs is a good opportunity for governors to raise the broader issues of how financial aid policies align with other state investments supporting lower tuition and institutional operations.

## ▀ Suggestions for Better Policy Alignment

All states are increasingly driven by the economic necessity of postsecondary education, regardless of whether a larger cohort of young adults or a declining population is projected. Unrelenting demand for higher education, coupled with a competitive environment for state support, is helping promote a policy climate that is open to experimentation and change. Governors' offices are actively exploring different financing policies that can bring institutions the stability they need, families the predictability in pricing they need, and states the increase in postsecondary access and attainment they need. Changes in Arizona (a 39 percent increase in tuition accompanied by a 140 percent increase in need-based financial aid), Colorado (converting institutional appropriations to portable student vouchers, and Illinois (locking in tuition for four years) reflect a policy environment that is more amenable to the alignment of tuition, financial aid, and appropriation policies.

Governors are encouraged to find ways to develop their role as policy influences and advocates for consumers and taxpayers. In these roles, governors may want to consider setting a minimum standard for policy coordination, such as an investment in need-based grant programs at a level equaling one-quarter the average public sector tuition charge.<sup>10</sup> This standard can be integrated into state-of-the-

state addresses and budgets. Similarly, governors can communicate this agenda to their governing board appointees at statewide trustee education meetings.

Better statewide data systems, including student academic progress and affordability indicators, can improve policy coordination. Governors and state legislators want to know how changes in tuition and financial aid policies impact student enrollment and retention. Stronger student-level data systems can help states audit the impact of their policies on particular student populations and adjust state, system, and institutional policies to fill identified gaps. In Illinois, college affordability has traditionally been maintained for all families despite the fact that it is deliberately not a “low tuition” state. In the past, Illinois has effectively used measures of net price of attendance to track how affordability is changing over time for families at different income levels. The state’s integrated financing policies has been recognized by top marks on the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education’s *Measuring Up* report cards.<sup>11</sup> Recent cuts, however, have eroded the strength of this historically strong model.

Some emerging financing issues were not identified by the governors’ advisors in this telephone survey. These issues will present opportunities - and challenges - for improving policy alignment. For example, public colleges and universities in a number of states (e.g., Virginia) are seeking greater independence from the state in exchange for new terms of accountability. As part of these conversations, governors may want to ensure that colleges and universities remain affordable for low- and moderate-income students and families, since increased tuition-setting authority is being sought. The new public commitments by the University of Virginia (UVA) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s to college affordability are illustrative. Both institutions guarantee that low-income students will not need to borrow money to

pay for their college education; UVA students who demonstrate financial need will have their loans capped at 25 percent of the cost of attendance. Both of these policies require coordinating institutional, state, and federal financial aid policies with tuition policies.

Lastly, governors are encouraged to support strategies that can strengthen statewide capacity to align higher education financing policies. One state doing just that is Kentucky. Since 1997, Kentucky’s Strategic Commission on Postsecondary Education (SCOPE) has been a valuable forum for bringing key issues to the public’s attention, particularly budget issues, in advance of legislative sessions. Members of SCOPE include the governor and six individuals designated by the governor; the president of the Senate; the speaker of the House of Representatives; the majority and minority floor leaders of both chambers; the chair of the Appropriations and Revenue Committee of both chambers; the minority caucus chair of each chamber; a member appointed by both the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House; a member appointed by both minority floor leaders of both chambers; and members of the statewide policy coordinating council for higher education.

Among other things, the committee receives a budget-planning report in the fall of each odd-numbered year in advance of the biennial budget session. This report affords the governor an opportunity to advise SCOPE about the financial condition of the commonwealth and the likely funds the executive branch will recommend that the General Assembly appropriate for postsecondary education. This venue also affords an opportunity for the council to advise SCOPE about how the projected postsecondary education funds should be allocated, based on its priorities. SCOPE has proven extremely useful to the council in helping align appropriations, tuition, and financial aid policies in support of Kentucky’s statewide goal of increasing enrollment by 80,000 in this decade.

## ▀ Conclusion

Governors' main lever to steer their public higher education systems is the state budget. Tuition, financial aid, and appropriations policies uniquely and collectively can affect the likelihood that students enroll in and complete a postsecondary credential – and whether state economies grow. With the right statewide capacity to align higher education financing policies, governors can help make higher education more productive. This statewide policymaking capacity will take different forms in different states, but as is the case in Kentucky, it will be characterized by the ability to set goals, measure and publicly report progress and gaps, and target scarce resources on areas of greatest public benefit. As states continue to grapple with requests from public institutions for greater institutional autonomy and privatization, it is this statewide capacity to align financing policies that can protect the public's interest in its higher education system.

## ▀ About the Authors

Kristin D. Conklin is a senior policy analyst in the Education Division at the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices (NGA). In this role, she leads NGA's efforts to provide postsecondary education research, analysis, and consultation to the nation's governors. Conklin is also responsible for helping states implement high school reform agendas and is supporting an initiative, *Redesigning the American High School*, led by NGA's Chairman, Virginia Governor Mark Warner. Prior to working for NGA, Conklin served as director of the Washington, D.C., office for the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. In this capacity, she developed a comparative 50-state report card on higher education. Conklin earned an M.P.P. from Georgetown University and a B.A. from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

Justin Wellner is currently serving a two-year administrative fellowship with the National Institutes of Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In 2003, he received his M.P.P. and M.A. in higher education from the University of Michigan. During his graduate studies, he interned with both the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance and the National Governors Association. Prior to returning to graduate school, Justin spent three years working as an assistant dean of admissions for two selective national liberal arts colleges.



# ▀ Appendix A. Survey Instrument

National Governors Association (NGA)/  
Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)

## GOVERNORS' SURVEY ON TUITION AND STUDENT AID

*Supported by a grant from  
Lumina Foundation for Education*

BACKGROUND (Coded in Advance)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date/Time \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Party Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ Years in Office \_\_\_\_\_

### INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking about 20 minutes to talk with me. The National Governors Association and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education are studying the tuition and financial aid policy-setting process in the states. We are interested in knowing the degree to which decisions about tuition and financial aid are aligned, and what your thoughts are about the process. This research is supported by Lumina Foundation for Education. *Responses will be reported only on an aggregate basis, so your individual responses will be kept completely confidential.*

### SECTION I

First, I'm going to ask you a series of questions about the way your state approaches tuition and financial aid policy.

1. Describe the role of each of the following individuals or entities in establishing **tuition** policy in your state. Please indicate whether the entity has a **significant role**, **some role**, or **no role at all**.

	Significant Role	Some Role	No Role
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legislature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State higher education agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual system governing board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Are there any other entities in your state that have a **formal** role in establishing state **tuition** policy?

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. What would you say is the level of coordination **between the governor and these other state entities** when setting **tuition** policy? For each entity, please tell me whether there is a **great deal of coordination on tuition policy, some coordination, or no coordination at all.**

	Great Deal of Coordination	Some Coordination	No Coordination
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State higher education agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual system governing board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Describe the role of each of the following individuals or entities in establishing policies dealing with state **student financial aid**. Please indicate whether the entity has a **significant role, some role, or no role at all.**

	Significant Role	Some Role	No Role
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legislature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State higher education agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual system governing board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Are there any other entities in your state that have a **formal** role in establishing **state student financial aid policy**?

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. What would you say is the level of coordination **between the legislature and these other state entities** when making policy decisions about **state student financial assistance**? For each entity, please tell me whether there is a **great deal of coordination on financial aid policy, some coordination, or no coordination at all.**

	Great Deal of Coordination	Some Coordination	No Coordination
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State higher education agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual system governing board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## SECTION II

I am now going to ask you about the degree to which **tuition policy AND student financial aid policy** are aligned.

7. Would you say that your state has a fundamental philosophy about the relationship between tuition and financial aid? I am talking about a philosophy such as **“high tuition, high aid”** or **“low tuition, low aid.”**

- Yes, high tuition, high aid
- Yes, low tuition, low aid
- Yes, other
- No fundamental state philosophy (skip to Q10)

8. When making decisions about **tuition and financial aid**, how much does that philosophy shape the decisionmaking process in your state?

- Always a consideration
- Occasionally a consideration
- Never a consideration

9. What would you say are the three top factors that influence your decisionmaking about **tuition and financial aid**? I’m talking about state, federal, political, economic, or other kinds of forces.

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10. I'm going to read you a few statements about the overall policy process in your state regarding **tuition and student financial aid**. For each one, please tell me whether you agree or disagree.

	Agree	Disagree	Neither
The process is efficient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process allows for flexibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process results in fair policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process results in equitable policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process provides for maximum legislative input.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process provides for maximum input by students and parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process results in the alignment of tuition and financial aid policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. What best describes the process in your state when determining **tuition and financial aid policy**? Would you say there is a great deal of alignment between tuition and financial aid decisions? Would you say these decisions are typically made by different groups at different times? Or would you say these conversations are usually completely separate?

- There is a great deal of integration between tuition and financial aid policy decisions
- These decisions are made by different groups at different times
- These are typically completely separate conversations

12. Would you like to see **better alignment** between **tuition and financial aid** policymaking?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

13. Are there ways you can think of that your state could accomplish better integration between **tuition and financial aid policies**?

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION III

Finally, I just have a few questions about issues you see coming before the state in the next two to three years.

14. For each of the following, please tell me whether you think this will be an issue before the state in the next two to three years.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Decreasing the overall share of the state higher education budget.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuition increases.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limits on in-state tuition (for example, to only four or five years per student).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Differential tuition rates for residents versus nonresidents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Differential tuition rates for students in different programs (for example, college of education, college of business).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Linking tuition increases to median family incomes, Consumer Price Index, or some other measure of inflation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increasing taxes to offset tuition increases.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increasing need-based student financial aid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increasing merit-based student financial aid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding the right mix of need- versus merit-based aid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shifting funds from institutional support to student financial aid programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performance funding for higher education.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: efficient growth/cost management.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: student transfer and/or timely degree completion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: adult participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriations/tuition/financial aid policies that promote: dual enrollment/early colleges.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Are there any other major issues regarding tuition or financial assistance you see coming up in your state in the next one to two years?

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Are there any conversations going on right now in your state about creating a different process for making **tuition policy**?

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. Are there any conversations going on right now in your state about creating a different process for making **student financial aid policy**?

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.  
We expect our final report to be available in late summer 2004.  
We will send you a copy.

## ▲ Appendix B. Survey Letter of Introduction

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education are talking with governors' education advisors as part of a major research project on higher education finance. The study will help us better understand the state policy process as it relates to decisions about college affordability; learn about governors' concerns with the process; and identify innovative state models.

To that end, Justin Wellner will be contacting you in the next week to schedule a time to talk with you. I promise this conversation will take no longer than 20 minutes of your time.

I realize this is a hectic time for you, but your insight will be extremely valuable to our research. I will be happy to share our information with you at the conclusion of the project.

Please feel free to contact me at 202/624-3629 ([dlinn@nga.org](mailto:dlinn@nga.org)) or Kristin Conklin at 202/624-3623 ([kconklin@nga.org](mailto:kconklin@nga.org)) if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Dane Linn

Director, Education Division

## ▲ Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Absolute dollars for higher education are not declining, however. See State Higher Education Executive Officers, *State Higher Education Finance, FY 2003* (Denver, CO: State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2004).
- <sup>2</sup> See for instance, Edward St. John's research and recommendations, cited in *Expanding College Access: The Impact of State Finance Strategies* (Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation for Education, 2004).
- <sup>3</sup> Anthony P. Carnevale and Donna M. Desrochers, *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-16 Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Educational Testing Service, 2004).
- <sup>4</sup> Dennis Jones, "Financing in Sync: Aligning Fiscal Policy with State Objectives," in *Policies in Sync: Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid for Higher Education* (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003), 9.
- <sup>5</sup> Julie Davis Bell, *Linking Tuition and Financial Aid Policy: The State Legislative Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, August 2003).
- <sup>6</sup> A few education policy advisors and their representatives responded in writing to the survey, rather than participating in a phone interview.
- <sup>7</sup> Connecticut, Minnesota, and Tennessee.
- <sup>8</sup> Governors, however, have played leadership roles in creating merit-based aid programs in such states as Georgia, Maryland, and West Virginia. They also have a record of supporting aid programs designed to recruit students into high-demand industries.
- <sup>9</sup> This state has been recognized by the National Governors Association and Lumina Foundation for Education for its "promising practice." Coordination of policies in this state has resulted in significant increases in college participation and improvement in access and persistence among low-income students.
- <sup>10</sup> St. John, 16.
- <sup>11</sup> The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, *Measuring up 2002: The State-By-State Report Card for Higher Education* (San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002), 104.

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