



Rethinking Education

Higher education leaders call for a seamless transition from high school to post-secondary education

We can't do it alone – and neither can you. That message came through loud and clear as a panel of higher education representatives and an audience of school board members and district officials engaged in a lively exchange of questions, concerns and comments about expectations and collaboration at the State Education Convention.

“I think we need to get over exiting K-12 and entering post secondary education as a model. We need seamless education because it does not proceed in lock step,” panelist Dr. Rolf Wegenke, president of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, said. “Learning is life long. We’re

still talking as if you start here and end up there. We need to be seamless. The idea of exiting and entering is out of date.”

Wegenke was joined on the panel by Dan Clancy, president of the Wisconsin Technical College System; Dr. Kevin Reilly, president of the University of Wisconsin System; and WASB Executive Director John Ashley.

Panelists began by answering a question about what their systems’ expectations for students are and whether they are different than in the past.

Today’s students need to have a very solid academic background especially in reading, math and science, Clancy said. Students also should enter technical schools with a good understanding of their career

Session Details

TITLE *Higher Education and Public Education Collaboration*

PRESENTERS **Dr. Rolf Wegenke**, president of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; **Dan Clancy**, president of the Wisconsin Technical College System; **Dr. Kevin Reilly**, president of the University of Wisconsin System; and **John Ashley**, WASB Executive Director

interests. Career exploration is critical and should start at the middle-school level, he added.

In addition to a core curriculum, students entering the University of Wisconsin System should be able to demonstrate an ability to apply the

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concepts they have learned, Reilly said. They should be able to not just solve math problems but explain how they did it and critique others’ methods. The abilities to communicate effectively, work in teams and appreciate diversity are all part of what he called a new “meta skill set.”

Because of the new, more rigorous expectations for students – driven primarily by changes in the workplace and demands from businesses – collaboration between K-12 systems and all higher education systems is crucial, the panelists agreed.

There are many examples of programs throughout Wisconsin

where high school students can earn college credit while still in high school. Clancy urged school board members and district officials to learn what types of programs are available in their area.

“Dual enrollment is a major challenge and a major opportunity,” he said.

Panelists also reminded audience members that there are a wide range of higher education options available for students, even among a single system.

“I think there’s a place in the University of Wisconsin System for everyone,” said Reilly, noting that his system included not just the

highly competitive University of Wisconsin-Madison but many other four-year campuses and two-year campuses where students can start their college career.

Wegenke agreed that there is a range of options in each system, calling the admission process at independent colleges and universities “truly individualized.”

“We’re looking for the fit,” he said.

Panelists also addressed the ways their schools had incorporated technology into their curriculums. Many entire degree programs are now offered online at technical colleges and at University of Wisconsin campuses. ■

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