

Interesting Times for Higher Education MP4 Video Transcript

Presenter: David Longanecker, president, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)
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– By Design: Taking ALL Allied Health Students Across the Finish Line
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Welcome to WICHE, to the learning center of the State Higher Education Policy Center. This facility is one that we share, WICHE, with the State Higher Education Executive Officers Organization and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. And it's a pleasure to have you here, today.

My career in higher education has been almost entirely in the policy side of higher education, rather than the practice side, as most of you are engaged. And I would tell you that this period of time in which we're engaged now is about as exciting as any point in my career. And I've been in higher education during a wonderful period of the growth of higher education.

But what makes this a period now, I think, so particularly interesting is that we're in transitions. You know that old Chinese saying, may you live in interesting times, and then there's a debate about whether that's a proverb or a curse. Well, we're getting the chance to figure that out, because these are certainly interesting times.

And what's so interesting about this period is that it's really very different than many of the others, because we're talking about a different kind of expansion in the opportunities for higher education. We're talking about a different financial environment in which we operate. The expansion for much of my career was an expansion of very traditional age students, sort of the egalitarian movement in higher education from being a fairly meritocratic, or elite, system to a more egalitarian system. But it was still focused primarily on a traditional set of students, with the presumption that most, but not all students, should logically pursue secondary education.

That really has changed in the last decade. We're now in a position where we are talking about most and almost all students needing some form of post-secondary education to both succeed economically and sort of socially in their adult lives.

And that's a very different environment than say when I went to college where about half of us went to college, and about half of us who went to college completed. And that met the economic needs of our economy, and it met most of our social and civic needs, as well.

That has really radically changed. And what's also happened, particularly in the last few years that sort of comes around to CHEO and to the TAACCCT grants, is that we've come to appreciate and understand the critical importance of those middle skill jobs, that it's not just the bachelor's and beyonds that are important. It's the certificates and the associate degrees that provide an awful lot of the important middle skill positions in our economy.

And so that was recognized by the feds. And along comes the TAACCCT grants. And out of that comes this CHEO grant, which is really, from our perspective, a wonderful partnership for us to work with Pueblo and with all of you, as we sort of carry this grant through to its completion next year.

It's important to us because this is the nature of our work. We do collaboration. Our mission is to expand access to high quality post secondary education for the citizens of the west. It's that simple. And we do that by collaborating with the states and the institutions in our 15 states and the territories of the Pacific Islands.

So that's why this is so important. But it's important for another reason, which is that this expansion is occurring without the additional resources that used to come. Now, it's not so much, if you look at it clearly, that the states are actually reducing their commitments to higher education. That's true in some states, and it's true in some of our states. It's mostly the result that the rapid increase in the demand for higher education, particularly at the sub-baccalaureate level, has really pressed us into finding new and more efficient ways of providing education.

And that's where this grant becomes so important, and particularly those of you who are the instructional designers and creating the curriculum and creating the science labs that we're working on in CHEO, because what we've got to do is to find a way in which we can make it possible for this expansion to occur, and do so in an environment that provides a high quality education in ways other than we have done traditionally, because the money isn't going to be there for new bricks and mortar, for new lab expansions, and whatever.

And it's particularly important in the STEM fields, because we do have to find ways in which we can provide these rich educational experiences to students who are not there on campus for geography or life reasons, or who are indeed on campus but who are stretching our lab requirements or course work requirements beyond what our existing physical facilities can endure. So we've got a heck of a challenge ahead of us.

But it's a really fun time to be talking about this, because it was really fortunate that Al Gore invented the internet and made it possible for us to have some of the tools available that will allow us to do this as we move forward. So I want to welcome you here. I hope you have a very enriching and wonderful day. And thanks for being a part of this wonderful partnership that we're so pleased to be involved with you in. Thanks again. And have a great day.