

**STATE PLAN
FOR ALABAMA HIGHER EDUCATION
FORGING STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: 2009-2014**

STATUS REPORT
DECEMBER 2014



Prepared by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education

Acknowledgement

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) would like to thank the members of the Statewide Planning Advisory Council who gave of their time and expertise to develop this Plan. Representing public and private colleges/universities, K-12, business/industry, state agencies, Chambers of Commerce, an educational foundation, and with the support of the Center for Business and Economic Development at the University of Alabama, the Center for Government at Auburn University-Montgomery, the Council set a new direction in strategic planning, mission responsibility, and identifying specific priorities in moving Alabama forward educationally, economically, and culturally in an effort to formulate a statewide policy agenda. Special thanks to Dr. Pamela Arrington, formerly of ACHE, for coordinating and leading this Council.

And, a note of appreciation to the Commissioners for their commitment and leadership in coordinating educational opportunities for the citizens of Alabama.

Forward

This status report is the culmination of a change in the development of a strategic plan for higher education. The challenge of utilizing a diverse group representing partners from several areas proved both difficult and simple at times.

The collection of data over the five-year period was difficult because of the number of data sites, the varied interest and purpose of multiple partners, and working with a variety of calendars (academic, fiscal years, calendars/clock) and schedules. In many cases, the report strives to use extended longitudinal data (up to ten years) to establish trends and 2009-2013 data to provide benchmarks during the time of the Plan.

In several areas, the data was used in setting benchmarks upon which future studies and effort may be applied.

The use of words that “qualify” a success or failure do not always provide sufficient information to “quantify” a trend or movement. Hopefully, future efforts can use this information and these new benchmarks to set goals that clearly reflect a movement that can be measured.

This is a beginning!

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Strategic Plan Overview

The State Plan, Forging Strategic Alliances: 2009-2014, was a first time effort by the Commission to utilize and combine the multiple and varied interests of several diverse groups ([Appendix A: Planning Advisory Council Membership](#)). The Commission asked and received support in the development of the state's higher education plan from both two year and four-year public and private institutions, K-12, business and industry, community groups, and an educational foundation. Rather than a single higher education view point, the purpose of this Plan was to recognize the need for an educational system that works in line with the fundamental needs of its students; thus ensuring a trained and educated workforce.

In the four years since the Plan was developed and the report received (December 2009), it is obvious that the participants not only created a needed blue print of the state's educational process, which allowed benchmarks to be identified; they also addressed the future needs in supporting business and educational interests.

Under the planning phase, the Council conducted a "SWOT" analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). The end result was the recognition of a myriad of issues, concerns, and challenges. However, the Council found the results of the SWOT analysis cumbersome and so broad it could have become a challenge to the success of the Plan, if all of the institutional issues were addressed at once. In an effort to better serve and address the many "objectives" emerging from the SWOT analysis, the Council grouped together a number of these objectives into manageable priorities based upon similarity of purpose and/or need. In doing so, the Committee created a listing of "Statewide Priority Areas and Goals" ([Appendix B: Statewide Priority Areas and Goals 2009-2014](#)). The design of the plan was to use these priorities as concentrated focal points that would identify specific goals and create benchmarks as a determinant of present and future success based upon the end results supported by reliable and certifiable data.

This process allowed the Commission and other interested parties to modify the Plan, as needed, to ensure its success and continued support for Alabama's students, the economy, and future efforts.

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education is charged under Alabama Code, Section 16-5-6, Long-Range Planning which states, "The commission shall be responsible for statewide long-range planning for postsecondary education in Alabama. Such planning shall be the result of continuous study, analysis and evaluation. Plans will include the establishment of statewide objectives and priorities with methods and guidelines for achieving them."

Directed by this statutory requirement, ACHE and the higher education institutions have created a number of “long-range” plans for the State over the years. The planning efforts have provided a forum for the public colleges and universities to look internally and to present publicly all of the activities being conducted on their campuses that serve students and the state.

Historically, the plans were based upon a consensus of goals and activities determined by ACHE and college/university officers under (Section 16-5-5) of the Code, which established the Council of Presidents (COP) that sits as an advisory body for the Commission made up of all four-year college presidents, three public two-year college presidents, and the Chancellor of Postsecondary Education.

Throughout the earlier planning periods, the colleges/universities provided annual written summaries of their activities along with a final report that reflected each institution’s commitment to planning, service, accountability, and transparency. Simply, the reports and the culmination of the previous five-year efforts provided the principle stakeholders with a snapshot in time of higher education in Alabama, and their investment in workforce and educational preparation balanced with a high volume of research and development. Yet, there was little movement addressing statewide policy issues or a unified effort in dealing with mutual concerns at all levels of education.

The earlier plans focused on the goals reflected in the mission responsibility of each college/university (institution) and within the parameters of their constitutional and/or statutory authority. Many of the earlier goals; e.g., access, cooperation with business, governance, program quality, resource development, and workforce training were limited to local and/or regional efforts rather than a comprehensive statewide plan.

Several plans later, the ongoing efforts of the institutions continued to provide a snapshot without establishing a statewide, coordinated system effort to expand the many individual institutional successes into state public policy. Interestingly, regional success, interest, and effort became the biggest challenges to statewide system efforts (at all levels) and meeting statewide needs. Traditional political and power bases generated local success without a direct statewide movement.

The Forging Strategic Alliances: State Plan for Higher Education 2009-2014 was created to embrace the many institutional successes, to combine the activities of the institutions and to generate a statewide policy effort to support the state’s economic needs. To that end, the Commission thanks its many stakeholders!

Following the development and adoption of the new strategic plan, a required statutorily established evaluation (Report of the Ninth Quadrennial Evaluation, December 2010) was completed. Although the strategic plan had only been in place for one year the reviewing agency, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), submitted an evaluation to the State following a “...thorough evaluation of its (ACHE) accomplishments and strategic planning goals”

Many of the observations, findings, and recommendations from the evaluation became the proverbial litmus test by which the strategic plan was applied and measured. ACHE was recognized for "...making progress in reframing its mission from a regulatory agency to one with a much stronger policy — leadership role." Additionally, "ACHE has increased its outreach and visibility to numerous local, regional, and statewide groups." AGB also recognized that, "ACHE has developed a compelling State Plan for Higher Education, Forging Strategic Alliances: 2009-2014," but recognized that the Plan and all activities were fragile and challenged because ACHE "... operate(s) in a decision environment that is highly political and factionalized."

It is with that information, where internal system commitments must be coupled with external needs that move higher education from the mystique of the "Ivory Tower" for some, to meeting the practical and business needs of the students and state in a full, transparent and committed supportive environment. Alabama ranks low (22.6%) in citizens holding baccalaureate degrees (age 25+ at 22.6%, U.S. Census for 2009-2013), but recognizes the need for improving the educational opportunity provided by its educational system at all levels to remain competitive in a global economy. It is that transition that this report attempts to recognize and promote in the best interest of all our citizens.

This Plan was meant to identify key issues challenging the educational establishment and address them to improve and/or eliminate the problems. In that task, the Plan and end results were successful to a limited degree.

In describing the Plan's components, its strengths and weaknesses (much like a SWOT analysis) this report attempts to provide a better understanding of the complexity and challenges in developing a new process.

The level of commitment and the method of identifying statewide issues by the numerous partners is commendable. Their dedication to the process and utilization of the accumulated data was a positive effort. However, statewide issues in addressing those needs still remain. ([Appendix B](#)).

The priorities and goals provide an umbrella of interest and indicate a desire to set action levels to deal with the issues. The key challenge in addressing issues of this kind is to set specific objectives formulated on clearly established benchmarks and to identify current levels of function. Without established benchmarks as a start point or a clear target goal, there can be no real measure of success. Goals (outcomes) defined in the Plan as "increase, decrease, establish, expand, or address" are goal objectives that cannot be measured with any real accuracy. Do not misunderstand, the Plan is a success in identifying key issues, collecting and providing longitudinal data for benchmarks in Priorities 1, 2, 3, and 4 over the five years, and places education in a direct role to participate in support of workforce development, Priority 5.

It does not appear that these five priorities ([Appendix B: Priorities and Goals](#)), will change dramatically in the near future and may find their way to a new Plan. The need will be to provide tangible and realistic targets, i.e., increase graduation rates, decrease remediation needs, increase overall funding, and a commitment to a well-educated and trained population. The success of any effort should be measured by appropriate increases or decreases set by specific target numbers that when addressed will reflect the State's effort. The State Board of Education's 2020 Plan addresses many of those concerns and sets targets that could complement a new higher education plan.

Additionally, the opportunity for success through a dedicated partnership between education and business/industry is possible. The priorities outlined in this report support improvement and advance the development of a future comprehensive workforce development plan (Priority 5). Working together, business/industry, the Governor, and educational leaders form the Alabama Workforce Council (AWC), which is now at the center of efforts to address statewide needs in education, business interests, and the economy should make a difference now and in the future.

Priority 1—Cooperate with PK-12 to increase students’ preparedness for college and career

The Plan set a “Focus on academic and social transitions between high school and college . . . for success on the college level.” Goal 1 plans to “Increase graduation rates among two-year and four-year colleges and universities . . . Continued study and/or career opportunities.”

As the environment surrounding college admission and hopefully success in college becomes more intense, one can note national effort and trends in assisting high school students into college being mirrored at regional, state, and local colleges within Alabama.

There are any number of reviews, surveys, and data across the nation highlighting special programs and efforts designed to support students. The efforts in the K-12 arena dealing with the curriculum shift to a “common core”, and in many areas the expanded use of the ACT/SAT Advanced Placement (AP) courses and dual enrollments, are a few of the active tools supporting high school students for college. They also assess fundamental skills and preparation levels in order to allow for students to successfully adapt and complete the challenges of college and workforce preparation. The need to work collaboratively between K-12 and higher education is most evident in the first-year college experience. In a coordinated system, educators from K-12 to college must guide, encourage, retain, and eventually ensure that students complete the education cycle.

Alabama’s institutions are no different than its sister institutions across the nation. The numerous variables affecting a student’s road to success in Alabama again mirror many a national picture.

Those challenges are being addressed by the State’s institutions in a number of ways. Throughout the higher education system, the institutions have initiated and supported programs ranging from first year seminars to individual counseling support through the development of special programs to assist first time and transfer students with the creation of dedicated academic support centers. Designated labs, concentrating on writing and mathematics are often key tools in meeting the continuing demand for upgrade and remedial support training. The institutions have expanded and utilized formal learning communities, academic coaches, select housing (honors and specialty) for qualified students, academic pals (mentors), counseling, and a host of materials directed at preparation, admission, and support services for prospective and newly enrolled students. Among the colleges and universities there has been a significant commitment financially, as well as personal support to help students. One would need to spend weeks chronicling the efforts and programs available to students. The institutions’ websites carry detailed information, activities, and contact points to support students.

Goal 1. Increase graduation rates among two-year and four-year colleges and universities so that students are prepared for continued study and/or career opportunities.

Utilizing the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) that is the national reporting system coordinated on the state level by ACHE dealing with student data submitted and certified by each institution, Alabama's graduation rates do not meet national averages (as a state system) or show little gain. Two-year colleges show a 5% reduction in 150% time (3 years) rates from 20.93% to 15.89% over the period of the Plan (2009-10 - 2013-14). The four-year colleges, under the same 150% timeline (6 years) at the Bachelor's degree level, showed a slight increase of 2.31% from 47.15% to 49.46% ([Appendix C: Two-year College Graduation Rates](#) and [Appendix D: Four-year College Graduation Rates](#)).

There are a number of issues and circumstances that have influenced graduation rates, which include the escalating cost of education and an overall drop in enrollment the past two years. The literature and extensive media coverage reflect changes in student financial aid, preparedness, and remedial education requirements, which compound the issues challenging the improvement of the economy and the development of new workforce employment opportunities. It must be noted, these graduation rates are averages across the State. There are some colleges, both two-year and four-year that exceed the average and approach the national average. However, the student cohorts beginning in 2003-07 that would graduate in six years in the four-year colleges presents a challenging picture with eight of thirteen four-year colleges with graduation rates (during this Plan period) of less than 40% ([Appendix E: Four-year College 150% Graduation Rates](#)).

The two-year colleges present a similar picture. Only three of the twenty-six colleges measured had over a 40% graduation rate in the cohorts from 2006-2010 (different cohort dates due to the length of time to degree, ([Appendix F: Two-year College Associate \(completers\) Degree Cohorts 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 at 150% Time](#)). Again, the variables impact graduation rates, but the mission of each of the institutions, particularly the two-year colleges with short-term training, multiple stop-outs, employment demands, and family issues impact the college experience. Part-time and short-term attendance in the two-year colleges is the norm, but continues to provide benefits for the community colleges and the State.

For both the two-year and four-year colleges, the challenge of the recession beginning in 2008 with proration, reductions in State support, a depressed economy, and the ever-present and changing business complex and its technology demands, affected the transition from high school to college and the completion rates. Yet, there is a continuing effort among the colleges and universities to focus on the academic and social needs in preparing students.

The tendency to measure success in understanding the college experience, based upon time and completions, may not in this new age provide the answers and

improvement we seek. In dealing with time, we still use dated expressions based upon two-year and four-year college concepts and historical processes. Yet, data collected today are based upon 150% time or three years for a two-year degree and six for a termed four-year degree, which is inconsistent with student, family, educators, politicians, and business/industry expectations. We continue to set standards and success--completions--based upon time units, rather than measured, competency-based learning. It appears the only true measure (as perceived) of educational attainment is the amount of seat time spent. We continue to use hours of instruction, attendance requirements, days of the week, number of weeks and years in interpreting completion of a learning cycle. What should be measured is learning. Sadly, there are so many potential measures and products, each with its supporters and detractors, no single answer or solution meets educational and/or public acceptance.

The recognition for success tends to be based upon completions. Recognition, funding (many formulas incorporate completions into budget increases), and economic development move on completions. But, there is less interest in the retention factor and future success. The challenge to prepare, transition, and provide adequate educational training must be an ongoing and unified effort from pre-school through professional training, if Alabama is to remain competitive.

According to a "Blueprint for College Readiness State Profile," researched by the Education Commission of the States ([Appendix G](#): ECS, 2014), "Alabama has addressed six of the 10 anchor policies to improve college readiness in the state." The report states that Alabama implemented three of the four high school benchmarks and has moved to include indicators of college and career readiness. Higher education does not fare as well, especially in "Accountability" which highlights educational attainment goals, completion or attainment goals within a master plan (as indicated earlier in this report), and a performance funding model or metrics. This is not to say things are not improving, but rather when compared with the nation, Alabama's educational and business communities have a challenge and must continue to work together.

During the five years that this Plan covered, regardless of the concentration of effort in some areas, Alabama has not measured up to national completion rates/levels. The State's educational system (K-20) has had to deal with the recession beginning in 2008, critical cuts to education, high unemployment, and a depressed economy of the past five years. Although completions (degrees, certificates, and diplomas) have been impacted due to a number of variables, the colleges continue to work at improving preparation and transition with the system. Yet, with all those efforts, the public institutions have been unable, even with support from all areas, to increase completions. In 2010, completions declined from 20.93% (IPEDS Graduate Rate Surveys) to 15.89% in 2014 ([Appendix C](#): Two-year College Graduation Rates), and in some four-year colleges completions were as low.

One must recognize that most two-year colleges meet multiple state, business, community, and student needs with specialized training, upgrades, short-term certification, and service training typically not reflected on completions.

The multi-faceted mission of the two-year (community) college is much more than completions, but is again measured by the time to completion, rather than what is being learned and provided overall. Open admissions and need for remedial education had its impact on some of the four-year colleges too.

However, the four-year colleges overall had a slight increase in completions of 1.86% over the same five-year period. Again, from IPEDS Graduate Rate Surveys ([Appendix D:](#)), Alabama's public four-year colleges went from 47.60% in 2010 to 49.46% in 2014. Although far below the national average, it represents a concerted effort to address the problems.

In all, Alabama's colleges have recognized the many problems facing higher education and the transition from high school to college and have embraced the challenges by focusing on academic and social elements in preparing students for college and career.

One common challenge faced by all colleges is the initial preparation of students from high school to do college level work. Even recognizing best practices and using shared efforts among the colleges and K-12 partners, there is still much to be done.

Although Goal 1 identifies the need to "...increase graduation rates...so that students are prepared for continued study and/or career opportunities..." the ongoing demand for remedial training upon entry to college must be considered. Alabama is not alone in this battle for learning. The demand for remedial training is a national problem.

GOAL 2: Decrease the percentage of freshman level students requiring remediation statewide.

Data collected by ACHE over an extended period of ten years identifies a challenging picture of remedial education needs. Over the ten years (2004-2014) and during the period of the strategic effort, the pattern of need is an average of 32% to 33%. Simply stated, approximately 33% of all high school students graduating from a public Alabama high school and attending an Alabama public college need some sort of remedial training. ACHE created a chart with three maps ([Appendix H: 2008-2013 Remedial Maps](#)), Math Only, English Only, and those taking both Math and English remedial training to identify specific cohorts by county and area of need.

During the Plan's five-year period, English needs remained steady at 6% of those enrolled needing remedial support. Those needing both English and Math followed a similar pattern, but at the 10% to 12% level with a 1% decrease in 2012 and 2013. Although math followed a similar steady cycle, it was at a higher level of need at 16% with a drop of 1% in 2013. Given the ten-year analysis, it confirms that approximately one-third of Alabama public high school students entering a public Alabama college needed additional preparation and training at the high school level ([Appendix I: 2009-2013 Remedial Education Enrollment by Need](#)).

One challenge to the need for remedial education is the complaint that higher education does not have a common definition for remediation. Good or bad, as long as

institutions have different missions, different admissions, and standards of entry; the student's choice in institution will dictate levels of acceptance and remedial requirements.

The ACHE initiated a drive for an electronic transcript to be used at all levels along with a common (basic) application to assist, in part, identifying student needs and interest. The committee's consideration of these initiatives were affected by challenges regarding institutional admission authority and control. A common definition for remedial education may meet the same challenge. However, the [Plan 2020](#) by the State Board of Education (SBOE) highlights "Alabama's goal is 100 percent proficiency for all students" regardless of their many challenges.

The SBOE defines, ". . . a prepared graduate as a student who possesses the knowledge and skills needed to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing, first-year courses in a two-year or four-year college, trade school or technical school without the need for remediation." Highlighting the skill level and elimination of a need for remediation clearly sets a standard to address the ongoing issue of preparedness. Also, Career Technical Education (CTE) tracking emphasizes the effort going directly into job training and economic development.

Additionally, there are new studies being conducted on Advanced Placement (AP) enrollments and dual enrollments that may improve graduation and college attainment rates, which may reduce remediation needs. A key tool in dealing with and projecting graduation rates and remedial needs of Alabama's high school graduates can be found in the High School Gradation Report ([Appendix J: Summary Public High School Graduation Rates by Workforce Region](#) — example provided) that identifies graduation rates and all three cohorts of remedial education levels by county and high school.

This report and similar studies indicate an increase in high school graduation rates from 2009-2013, up approximately 2,881 students, but a smaller percentage, a 4.77 decrease in students enrolling in college following graduation. ([Appendix K: High School Graduation \(by number\) Enrolled in Higher Education Needing Remedial Training 2005-2013](#)). A possible future solution may be to attempt to understand the reasons for the decline in college attendance. The average college enrollment from 2005-2009 was approximately 55%. From 2010, the State has seen a steady decline from 55.5% in 2010 to 51.11% in 2013. Given all the effort that has gone into the transition from high school to college, one must wonder as to the issue.

Also, with the State Board of Education (SBOE) having adopted the "common core" and advancing the use of the ACT, WorkKeys, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASUAB), and other "College Career Indicators" in facilitating assessment of preparation for transition from high school to college, it appears that the educational and business partnerships are working.

In all, there has been a significant effort, but a mixed result in support of students at all levels of education. There are a number of partnerships, professor-to-teacher groups, new materials and tools, interest and commitment from many areas of the State, but little movement in other areas. The commitment is there, but a statewide initiative has not come to full bloom.

Priority 2—Establish a PK-20 Council

Goal 3: Establish a PK-20 Council to coordinate and advocate toward a fully integrated educational system with funding, assigned administrative responsibilities, and a commitment from the membership to sustain the work.

The emphasis for establishing a PK-20 Council was to “advocate toward a fully integrated educational system with funding (Priority 4) and assigned administrative responsibilities and a commitment from the membership to sustain the work.”

In creating Goal 3, the recommendation to “establish a PK-20 Council to coordinate and advocate toward a fully integrated education system . . .” within a partnership with business and industry became a challenge. As early as 2007, Alabama was one of eight states that did not have a formal statewide coordinated K-16, P-16, or PK-20 system to deal with the concept of life-long learning and coordinated educational training to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world. Earlier attempts to create a K-16 system met with resistance and were lost.

As provided in ACHE’s Ninth Quadrennial Evaluation, “The most visible effort to advance the Plan (Strategic Plan) is advocating for creation of a PK-20 Council, but creation of a council has been stymied by several factors.” However, as the Plan recommends, ACHE and partners tried to advance the common vision and seek a commitment toward an integrated system without changing the State’s educational alignment structure or encroaching on traditional funding and control elements of the institutions and various governing boards.

The PK-20 movement was recognized by supporters (identified as a State Priority #2 in the Plan) as a vehicle to advance student achievement, access and transition to college, teacher preparation, and creation of early learning options through an alignment of opportunities for students moving through the education process in a logical progression. The Student Pipeline, ([Appendix L: PK-20 Pipeline and Bundle](#)) represents a PK entry through graduate and professional degrees as an initial structural element to success for students. Throughout the Pipeline, there are fixed traditional exits, e.g., movement between grade levels, mandatory attendance, graduation cutoffs, and graduations.

Unfortunately, there are many more uncontrolled exits, e.g., remediation failure, drop-outs, detrimental economic shifts, and student support weaknesses in the system that challenge student success and completion. As presented in [Appendix L](#), the PK-20 Pipeline is in reality a cluster of mutually supported pipes. Pipe 2 represents current efforts and programs that are in use and funded. Pipe 3 represents new initiatives to be considered by the PK-20 Council for the advancement of options and the student data collection. Pipe 4 (presently in place with ACHE) forms the balance of the bundle.

The PK-20 bundle ([Appendix L](#)) was designed to restrict and, if possible, eliminate the gaps impeding students' progress while combining resources at all levels of education. The pipe bundle was designed to be supported by business/industry, the Governor/legislature, and coordinated by the PK-Council.

Several attempts to promote the PK-20 concept and Council were made through the years. Unfortunately, the State was dealing with the economic recession and its dire impact on the economy that reduced interest and support for a statewide PK-20 Council, which was negatively portrayed as another level of bureaucracy. There were a number of positive activities identified with the effort to forward the Pipeline concept, but most yielded little success. The attempts to establish the PK-20 Council are as follows:

1. Joint meeting of the State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) ([Appendix M](#): Partial Minutes, Joint Meeting of ACHE and SBOE on PK-20, March 2008).
2. Submission of a PK-20 plan to Governor Riley and all of the 2010 gubernatorial candidates.
3. A number of contacts were made with the Governor's Chiefs of Staff and multiple Education Policy Officers which may have contributed to Executive Order No. 36., 15 January 2013 ([Appendix N](#)) that established a business/industry and education task force to define and seek solutions to education and workforce training issues.
4. Submission of legislation supporting the development of a PK-20 Council was stopped in committee (2011) during the Legislative Session ([Appendix O](#): Legislation, SB 465 on PK-20).
5. Presented to the Council of Presidents (COP), ([Appendix P](#): Council of Presidents Minutes, August, 2009 on PK-20). Subsequently, the COP at its 21 October 2009 meeting formally approved the PK-20 effort, but through a "Resolution" changed the membership of the PK-20 Council as originally identified in the Strategic Plan 2009-14 ([Appendix P-1](#): Minutes and Resolution).
6. Presented the PK-20 system to approximately 20 key civic and educational groups (administrators, teachers, parents, clubs) throughout the State.
7. Engaged media outlets at all levels, e.g., news print, radio and television, and personal contacts with editorial boards.

Unfortunately, it was to no avail. The concern for the failing economy, control issues, and funding requirements as perceived among some educational leaders, slowed the movement.

Yet, the concept and a desire to establish a PK-20 Council was picked up by the A+ Educational Partnership and presented in a monograph titled: The Case for An Education Investment Council in Alabama. The title and content mirrored ACHE's recommendation for the PK-20 Council and system concept, but took into account the long-standing and challenging political environment to revitalize the effort and energy so needed to keep the concept alive. Note: the A+ Education Partnership was one of the original members of the ACHE Strategic Statewide Planning Advisory Council during the 2009-2014 planning cycle.

However, the success did not come in the development of a specific PK-20 educational structure, but rather a business centric vision of a coordinated effort between educational partners and business/industry with industry in the lead. Governor Bentley's Executive Order No. 36 in 2013 established a special task force to develop a Plan to coordinate and advance the relationship between K-12, two-year colleges, four-year universities, and business/industry ([Appendix N: Governor's Executive Order, No. 36, January 2013](#)). The Governor's College and Career Ready Task Force was launched in 2013 bringing together many of the originally designed PK-20 membership. This task force forged the foundation for the Alabama Workforce Council (AWC) in 2014 (See Priority 5, 2009-2014).

Eventually, through the efforts of many of the previously identified private and public groups, a workforce development effort surfaced and was established in law after a number of starts and stops.

The PK-20 concept is still being discussed and is reflected in the efforts of several school districts, colleges, and business/industry as they attempt to address educational needs, workforce requirements, and support for the economy. The call was for students to be college and career ready.

Priority 3—Increase graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields

In any research to identify student and teacher levels of attainment, it becomes necessary to specifically identify and define the elements or criteria that are to be measured.

Once again, we find the Plan (its goals) loosely defined and without specific identifiers that would provide a sense of movement and allow changes to be measured or fixed primarily for benchmarks and identifying increases or decreases in each area.

Goal 4: Increase the number of students majoring in STEM fields.

In trying to determine the number of students majoring in STEM fields, we, again, turn to the ACHE Student Data System. The System is designed to track students through their college enrollment using specialized encrypted data elements. This tracking capability can be extended through K-12 by utilizing the coding to recognize cohorts at the 9th grade level and follow them to graduation and entry to college ([Appendix J: Summary High School \(Public\) Graduation Rates by Workforce Region \(example\)](#)).

This System allows the State to identify the number of students majoring in STEM fields ([Goal 4](#)). The student data is linked to a statewide academic inventory maintained by ACHE that codifies instructional programs by a Classification of Instructional Programs model (CIP code). The CIP code can provide up-to-date enrollment participation by program that can be utilized in workforce projections, business recruiting efforts, resource (budget, personnel, equipment, etc.) assignments, and creation of public policy.

There has been a national, as well as an Alabama, recognition of the STEM fields and a specific movement to address the critical shortage of students entering and mastering one of the fields. The components/programs (disciplines) that comprise the STEM fields vary among those charged with providing and meeting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics needs. Often a word change in the title, a curriculum (course) modification, or technology advancement will add or subtract a program from STEM classification.

The most comprehensive list, presently available, is published by the Department of Homeland Security with approximately 400 fields of study and training in certificate and/or degree granting areas. The diversity of the fields and variations of content areas to be classified as STEM can be seen in the following example: “Code 24.0202, Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies, a program that is a structural science, social science, and humanities ...IPEDS CIP”. It became immediately apparent in dealing with security and safety measures, the federal government attempts to identify any program (title or content) that may be a perceived threat to the country by interpretation, but may not have a similar application in the State. This required that the State Academic Inventory become the determining factor in identifying STEM courses/programs for this report.

Alabama’s colleges and universities provide many of the programs and options to fulfill

employment/workforce needs. Prior to the creation of the Strategic Plan (2000-08) and the initial year of the Plan (2009), Alabama did show a slight increase in STEM enrollments but in key areas, during this period, there were losses (lack of enrollment) in Computer and Information Sciences, and in Science Technologies overall, which had an impact on growth. During this same period, Alabama had a slight general enrollment decline, which forced the institutions dealing with the recession and decreased state financial support to depend and react to student motivation and choice in program/degree interest. Based upon the reality of the situation (enrollment) and the emphasis for STEM graduates, ACHE tracked the majors of interest for all STEM completions conferred (2009-13) in STEM fields completed ([Appendix Q: Fall 2008 Comparison 2013 STEM Majors](#)). In the past three years (2011-13 [Appendix Q-1: Top Ten Degrees Conferred 2005-2013](#)), licensed practical/vocational nurse training has conferred over 800 degrees a year in that period, which seemingly addressed shortages in the field and bumped up STEM completions.

It appears that nursing and health sciences at both the two-year and four-year college levels have continued to grow because of institutional efforts in promoting the STEM fields. Unfortunately, the conferred degrees in research science and math have decreased. Yet, in utilizing the STEM field designated degree program matrix from Homeland Security as a guide with our academic program inventory, Alabama, between the period of the plan (2009-2014) increased the number of conferred degrees (completers) in all STEM fields by 30.58% or a total of 9,337 in 2014. This compares to overall completions across the State at 15.85% or 47,396 graduates ([Appendix Q-2: Top Ten--Increases/Decreases, STEM Completions 2009-2014](#)).

Alabama's two-year and four-year colleges appear to be making a concerted effort in the STEM fields. As earlier stated there are still significant shortages of qualified graduates, e.g., cellular biology and histology, electronics and electronics engineering, and the biological sciences in general.

As Alabama's colleges and universities continue to support the advancement of STEM field participation, the simplest measure of the success can be seen in a comparison between 2008 and 2013 enrollments ([Appendix Q: Fall 2008 Comparison 2013 STEM Majors](#)). The two-year colleges show an increase of 1,261 students, while the four-year colleges have an increase of 2,861 for a system total of 4,122 students.

Goal 5: Increase the number, preparation, and retention of K-12 teachers in natural sciences, mathematics, and related career technology fields.

The increase noted above includes students enrolled to become teachers (Goal 5, Priority 3), but the number of STEM completers training to teach has decreased over the period of the Plan ([Appendix R: Teacher Certifications, K-12 in STEM Fields, 2009-2014](#)) from a high of 552 in 2011 to a low of 351 in 2014. Both math and science showed decreases with marginal increases in technology and engineering. The decrease may be attributed to fewer teaching positions available, industry recruiting and higher salaries in private business, or the demands on teachers in today's classrooms. A future consideration may be to work with Teacher Certification

and the Department of Labor to analyze the shift in the workforce. (The SBOE's teacher certification office does an excellent job of maintaining records and information that contributed to this report.)

Goal 6: Advance programs that strengthen preparation of both students and teachers in STEM-related fields.

The legislature did create an appropriation to increase STEM interest and place teachers throughout the State (Goal 6). In an attempt to increase the number of teachers in STEM and critical area fields, the legislature provided approximately \$2.7 million to provide scholarship/loans for students who agreed to teach in the STEM fields following graduation. The total single award was \$20,000 (\$5,000 a year), which would be forgiven for each year of teaching in an Alabama Public School. The award was provided to graduating high school seniors entering college. There were 84 full-time awards and 38 alternative awards (individuals holding degrees, in other fields willing to accept a reduced award to teach). Unfortunately, awarding the scholarship/loan to freshmen had several issues. Students changed majors and interest areas, dropped out after a short-time, or could not meet grade requirements for remaining in good standing or acceptance to the colleges of education. Seventy-nine students completed the program, both full-time and alternatives, from the original 122. Of that number (79), only 56 are actually teaching in the designated STEM fields, an approximate 46%.

There are other areas of support and many of the institutions provide reduced and financially supported programs (scholarships) to address the need for teachers in STEM fields, but as reflected in the actual certification of teachers in the fields: a challenge remains ([Appendix R: Teacher Certifications, K-12 in STEM Fields, 2009-2014](#)).

Overall in teacher preparation, Alabama has received a grade of "B" from the 2012-13 National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). Citing data collected, the NCTQ recognizes advancements in admission to Preparation Programs, Elementary Teacher Preparation Programs, Elementary Teacher Preparation in Mathematics, and Assessing Professional Knowledge. Alabama is making the effort to better prepare teachers for the rigors of the classroom and has made strides in improving teacher training. Yet, the need remains and the State must use this information to set benchmarks and improve.

Priority 4—Seek financial resources for education in Alabama

Goal 7: Provide benchmarks for higher education costs by identifying and sharing proven methods to improve efficiency.

In 2008, Alabama higher education was at its highest level of state funding in history establishing a benchmark for support. The institutions continued to grow and meet the demands of students and the State. However, the recession (2009-2013) changed the level of state support for all public colleges and universities. Change that saw past support for some institutions at the 35 to 45 percent level, dropped dramatically to 21 and 13 percent. Yet, the demand to address economic woes; and the challenge to provide more services coupled with a major priority shift to workforce development, left the institutions scrambling for larger shares of the state Educational Trust Fund (ETF) and seeking additional revenue from outside sources.

During this critical period, the federal government responded through its State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) program, but much of it was restricted to special areas and fixed time limits with extensive reporting requirements. Although a short-term success, the institutions were forced to increase tuition and fees to supplant state reductions in financial support. In response to the short falls, many of the institutions began sharing program offerings, expanded out-of-state recruitment, sought grants and contracts within service and mission parameters, consolidated instructional sites (creating partnerships), expanded online and modified delivery methods and capabilities, and partnered with local school districts, colleges, and business/industry to continue providing services to meet demand.

The impact of rising cost that the institutions faced were outside their control and has had a significant impact in setting benchmarks that improve efficiency. Beyond those individual institutional activities to manage cost, e.g. selective maintenance efforts, modifying delivery and adjusting utilities use, retirement and health benefits alternatives, extending equipment use and adjusting personnel assignments, responding to deferred maintenance needs, and increasing security/safety requirements, dramatically impacted savings efforts.

The efforts to expand State financial support have met with little success during this period because of the failing economy, its slow return, and the limitations on the legislature to deal with significant declines in overall state revenue forced on the State and institutions to cover more general funding needs in Medicaid, corrections, unemployment, rising personnel costs, expanding K-12 needs, and self-imposed limitations (e.g. Rolling Reserve Act, PACT Payments), which had a real impact on appropriated support for higher education.

Funded through the Education Trust Fund (ETF), educational services at all levels have been impacted. The historic one-third/two-third split funding projection (66 2/3% public K-12 and 33 1/3% higher education) was not met during the past five years. In reality, the effort of funding at those levels has rarely been met.

Funding did reach a 30% level for higher education in 2008, but with the recession and economic downturn, it has not returned to that level. Proration over the next few years continued to decrease state support. The ACHE, in meeting statutory requirements for presenting annual budget recommendations, originally known as the Unified Budget Recommendation (UBR) changed to a Consolidated Budget Recommendation (CBR) with graduated percentage increases, but with little effect. In contrast to the CBR, the Council of Presidents (COP), a statutory advisory body for ACHE, continued its interest and support for a return to funding at the 2008 levels during the planning (2009-2014) cycles. State economic issues and priorities neutralized their request too.

In addition to the ongoing challenges financially within the State, legislation was passed to help in budget planning (The Rolling Reserve Act), which actually had the effect of limiting increased support even if funding did become available. The State could not meet the 2008 level of funding and eventually sought relief from the federal government in several areas where SFSF funding set mandated levels of support at 2006 levels to meet "maintenance effort" requirements under SFSF funding. Alabama has not been able to meet the maintenance of effort and sought relief through exception. The target levels were never met, and state appropriations continued to decline.

In all, there have been a number of activities at all levels to address funding shortfalls and the economic challenges. Alabama's colleges and universities have worked on improving internal efficiencies in operations, expanded grant and research activities, consolidated educational programs, coordinated training with business/industry, developed new products and services forming business incubators and expanded educational delivery methods (online), to respond to workforce development and economic efforts with other state agencies and the Governor.

The ACHE will continue to seek additional funding for all the public colleges and universities. To that end, modifications have been made to the ACHE standard, a developmental formula for the CBR to better assign funding by recognizing select areas, e.g., libraries, teacher education and weighting of programs that may improve the allocation of funds system-wide.

GOAL 8: Expand sources of higher education revenue including the expansion of state support for higher education.

The statewide effort to increase revenue and state support for higher education has too often fallen victim to the challenges affecting state revenue sources. As indicated earlier, state support for higher education has dropped significantly to include three years in which proration was applied. Competition between institutions and levels of education for much needed funding was at a high. Tuition increases and projected

debt levels put the burden on students, which impacts and challenges those from low income and underprivileged backgrounds from entering or remaining in college. Enrollment and graduation rates remain, in most cases, below national averages.

Yet, ACHE's advocacy role coupled with institutional interest has had an important bearing on the budget recommendations. The State has not been able to return to the higher funding of 2007-2008 (benchmarked by the presidents), but has seen a slight increase of approximately 3% over the past four years.

The Consolidated Budget Recommendation (CBR), represents the Commission's recommendation to support the institutions, while addressing increases based upon "First Priority Recommendations" covering employee retirement increases, health insurance increases and special increases like those associated with Knight vs. Alabama (court ordered) or a state match for federal grants. In every case, ACHE requested increases for the institutions and added employee compensation, capital improvements and technology upgrades under a second priority recommendation. Overall, as ACHE met its advocacy roll, the reality of addressing the availability of state revenue resources and legislative interest remains a challenge. The ACHE recommendations have ranged from 3% to 13% annually with the highest request in 2009-2010 to respond to institutional benchmarks and to supplement budgets impacted by proration.

The actual Education Trust Fund (ETF) appropriation was considerably less than requested by ACHE in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. ACHE's recommendation (CBR) was also less than the appropriation, but more in line (ongoing) over the next three years (2010-2014). A similar pattern of funding is reflected for the two-year college system.

In all efforts to advance funding for the colleges, the legislature was limited in its response and little attention was given to the ACHE Standard Formula, institutional requests, or the CBR. The minor changes made by ACHE in the formula in 2013-2014, to accommodate shifts in funding recognition and needs at the institutional level, were not met in the actual appropriation. The Commission granted time for the presidents to respond to the budget changes incorporated in the formula seeking recommendations to address their budget concerns. The presidents have not responded to date.

However, on several levels, there appeared to be a movement and interest in performance based funding. This may be a topic for the next strategic plan, if considered in the 2015 legislative session.

In reviewing the budget requests/recommendations over the period of this Plan ([Appendix S: Budget Overview Higher Education 2009-2014](#)), a slight increase can be noted. But, as important to the Strategic Plan in setting benchmarks and developing formulas, it is the overall projection (desired outcome) under the statutes that requires a budget recommendation for higher education be submitted regardless of its value.

As represented in [Appendix S](#), the actual request by the institutions is represented (blue bar). The institutional requests, although benchmarked at 2008 levels range from approximately an 8% increase to over 50% on an annual basis. The institutional requests are based upon the benchmark and what is needed to meet demand.

Funding for higher education will remain a challenge based upon a fluctuating economy, continuing global threats to peace, the question of the value of higher education, the environment surrounding educational delivery, and workforce needs. However, it is the role of the Commission to remain an advocate for higher education, while trying to balance the dominating fiscal realities facing the State.

Priority 5—Establish a Comprehensive Workforce Development Plan

Although the Commission is not directly engaged by statutory role with workforce development, the Commission as early as 2007 identified a means of addressing the needs of workforce training by creating a tracking system of training and education that could identify the varied occupational skills (degrees, certificates) necessary for success in industry, while attempting to respond to a growing need to spotlight drop-out trends and the increasing problem of remediation. Weaknesses in the educational Pipeline (See Priority 2) compounded the problem of identifying a qualified and prepared workforce.

GOAL 9: Supplement the development of a flexible, unified workforce education and training system that addresses occupational skills in a range of industry sectors.

In response, during the 2006-2008 period, several attempts were made to generate gubernatorial interest, legislative participation, and educational support through joint meetings, formal briefings, drafted legislation, and utilization of the Commission's advisory committee (COP) to align partners and resources to define a "qualified workforce." None of these activities resonated with all the parties.

Yet in 2009, interest and support began to shift in the creation of a system that paired business/industry needs with educational training. There were a number of attempts to generate interest in a PK-20/Workforce movement, but much of the energy surrounding each start-up waned from time to time or lost out due to big challenges facing state officials, e.g., Common Core, the economy, unemployment levels, and Medicaid, Corrections, etc. The fear seemed to be that another council, committee, or board was being created to set another level of bureaucratic interference. The potential loss of control and funding galvanized the opposition in resisting the creation and role of a PK-20 Council.

If there was a success, it was in generating interest in people (Governor, legislature, college officials, and business/industry) to think about a coordinated effort. The PK-20 Council remained on the ACHE agenda and was presented to several audiences throughout the state. The "effort" allowed ACHE to better support research and area interests by using the Student Data System (containing 9 million records) to identify workforce areas, high demand occupations, training options, and service needs.

Workforce development brochures (statewide and by workforce regions) were created and provided to all interested parties and as part of the creation of ad hoc reports for business, community, and state economic development agencies. Simply, each brochure identified local/area educational completion rates, number of students,

college interest areas, i.e., majors with longitudinal review capabilities. Attempts to tie Department of Labor data with student data (**Priority 10: Address labor market demands and/or needs**) to identify potential options, set outcomes, to predict labor/employment needs, and assist in supporting or recruiting new businesses was limited due to issues dealing with worker's privacy rights and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations restricting student data access. This strategic plan period was the first in using a formal statewide, multi-agency coordinated effort dealing with career and technical education.

The ACHE also participated in the Career and Technical Education Commission's (C&T Education Commission) development of the group strategic plan and provided student data to support the effort. The 16 career clusters that were identified matched ACHE's strategic plan commitment in Priority #1 "preparedness for college and career," Priority #3 "increase graduates in STEM fields," and supported Priority #5 to "establish a comprehensive Workforce Development Plan." The concentration of the C&T Education Commission on workforce/career development reflected a change, although slight, from a pure academic/instructional PK-20 model to a business/career driven design with an emphasis in workforce preparation.

In 2010, House Joint Resolution 832 (HJR 832) by Representative DeMarco was recognized and became law (ACT No. 2010-638). The HJR/ACT formed the Alabama Innovation Council Study Commission (AIC). The Commission was comprised of twenty-five leaders from business, state government and higher education (research universities). The emphasis of the Commission's efforts were directed at Technology-Based Economic Development (TBED). ACHE and the research universities were ultimately recognized as part of a permanent Alabama Innovation Council (AIC) to generate the workforce development, research, training, and financial base with a foundation to solicit private funding for innovation.

However, the funding aspect of the effort along with political challenges related to tax credits and creating a new "commercialization scholars" program drained the momentum behind the movement. Although ACHE had been an active participant and recommended for permanent membership, there was little public recognition of the final report or an effort to address the recommendations. It should be noted that the AIC began its efforts during the recession and the financial issues confronting the state created a gap from what could have been political reality. ACHE continued its participation and support of a comprehensive workforce development plan.

Goal 10: Address labor market demands and/or needs.

In January 2013, Governor Bentley established a College and Career Ready Task Force comprised of business representatives and educators from all levels. Although similar to the make-up of previously recommended PK-20 Council, the Task Force was charged to work together to help the State develop a more coordinated approach to

workforce development. The Task Force moved quickly to provide the Governor with several recommendations which identified a number of issues and concerns. The key components that surfaced were to establish clear career pathways to education and employment, market the issues, inform the public in a statewide communication effort, create and establish an industry board, and improve management decision-making tools. These and a number of other objectives, forwarded by the Task Force, reflected the basis of ACHE's strategic plan.

The Task Force's recommendations became a game changer in business and education's relationship and partnering. The change was never more evident than in the creation and establishment of a new Alabama Workforce Council (AWC), comprised of 28 business and industry representatives with education's support to "examine ways to design education programs that match the needs of business." The AWC established four working committees ([Appendix T](#), AWC Committee structure with short/long term goals) to analyze the environment and provide a plan (blueprint) to support the State's PK-20W movement. Here the emphasis of placing an educational pipeline within a PK-20 framework to address business needs from an educational perspective changed to a business perspective. Designed to offer advice to educators at all levels, it changed the dynamics of the effort and began setting objectives within workforce regions. To further expand workforce development, the Department of Postsecondary Education hired three new workforce development liaisons to provide technical assistance to regional workforce councils and to expand communication efforts with the colleges ([Appendix U: Alabama Workforce Development Liaisons](#)).

ACHE is not identified as a participant in the movement, but remains available to provide the necessary educational and student data to support the Council's activities. There is not a formal comprehensive statewide workforce development plan based on the concept advocated in Forging Strategic Alliances 2009-2014.

Yet, the shift in direction and leadership born of a number of councils, committees, and task forces, where educational and ACHE participation has led to a leadership initiative, may be all that was needed and hoped for over the last five years. There is strength in working together! If ACHE and the State can learn to operate outside and above the highly political, often fractionalized, and negatively competitive system, and use the PK-20W Workforce Council to its advantage, the State should be able to move forward in career and college student readiness, workforce development, and economic advancement.

Conclusion

The development, introduction, and implementation of any long-term effort is a challenge, especially an education strategic plan. The multiple variables, e.g., the diverse interest of participants, change in advancing technology, new findings in the field(s), competition levels, politics, the economy, etc., . . .all contribute to the challenge of development of a wide range of topics (priorities) contained within a single blue print for directing effort, conduct, and commitment. Unfortunately, those same variables that lead to success often complicate and challenge the process, development, and finding of an end result within the Plan's life-time.

In this case, the Plan was challenged by three key variables: 1) the severe and abrupt downturn in the economy; 2) a number of opposing political agendas, and 3) a significant number of changes in educational leadership statewide and at all levels. Much of the positive momentum in the development and implementation of addressing the five major priorities of the Plan was lost over 2010-2013. Maintaining the momentum of the early level of success in all the priority areas was replaced with a survival instinct. The financial challenges of the recession period and major changes in student financial aid programs forced many institutions into double digit tuition increases annually to off set reductions in state support.

The tuition increases, federal limitations on student financial aid, and overall increases in operating costs of doing business became an ongoing challenge. Enrollments, graduation rates, and the steady need for remedial education support to qualified students were impacted by a steady decline in state support funding and escalating cost of operation outside the complex authority of the institutions. Regardless of the many innovations in delivery of educational services and the number of committees and task forces created to address the issues, the limitations for funding were further impacted by history and the status quo in a very political environment.

The survival needs and historical power base of the many constituents reflected an individual desire for success, rather than a statewide position and effort presented in the strategic plan. As presented in the many state reports available (see appendices) and the national ratings, Alabama typically remained at the same levels of success with a "D+" rating statewide in Quality Counts and the 40 Areas of Review.

In this period (2009-2014) there were many changes in education leaders, thus interest and understanding of the State Plan directly impacted the momentum affecting the Plan's implementation, sustainability, and in some areas, its success.

The following, by priority and goal, are the findings from the review of the past five years.

Priority 1, Goal 1 -- Graduation rates, except for some institutions have, on average changed little and remain at approximately 40% system-wide with few exceptions.

Priority 1, Goal 2 -- Remediation rates for recent 2014 high school graduates remain approximately the same (32%) at college level during this period. Note: a longitudinal 10-year study has the same findings and identifies ongoing remediation levels of 32% - 35% for public high school graduates entering a public college in the Fall. Remediation rates do not reflect returning students seeking or needing remedial support, which could increase the numbers.

Priority 2, Goal 3 -- Although heavily supported at many levels, a PK-20 Council was not created. However, over the years the concept and many of the parties involved in the original goal setting participated in a variety of projects incorporating the PK-20 concept that eventually became the Governor's Alabama Workforce Council that is working on business and educational needs.

Priority 3, Goal 4 -- Alabama has seen a significant increase in enrollments in the STEM fields at over 30% during the period of the Plan. There are a number of STEM fields identified in the Top 5 and Top 10 majors (completions) at all levels of instruction and degrees (See Student Profiles @ www.ache.alabama.gov).

Priority 3, Goal 5 -- In the training and certification of teachers in STEM fields, Alabama saw an increase in critical areas. However, that increase was reduced later in the period. One assumption is that with the success of students in science and math, industry was hiring them. Additionally, due to budget reductions at all levels of education fewer new teaching positions were available.

Priority 3, Goal 6 -- Many of the two-year and four-year colleges are working directly with local K-12 partners in emphasizing STEM careers and providing a number of avenues and support options to assist students, which include dual enrollment, AP courses, and direct counseling services, which could become a winning combination to advance the State.

Priority 4, Goal 7 -- The colleges and universities have worked diligently to do more with less. Although the SFSF program helped in maintaining services, reduced state funding and the rising cost of operations created a challenging, albeit, innovative environment! The institutions responded by consolidating instructional programs, developing partnerships for service at all levels to address costs, advancing educational delivery methods, and seeking alternative funding sources. Yet, as reflected in [Appendix S: Budget Overview Higher Education 2009-2014](#), financial need has not been met.

Priority 4, Goal 8 -- The colleges and universities were deliberate in seeking grants and outside funding and were highly competitive in their efforts.

However, ACHE continued to recommend to the legislature and the public the need for additional financial support. The ACHE submitted annual budget increases for the colleges/universities through the Consolidated Budget Recommendation (CBR) process provided to the legislature, which included a recommendation to return to 2008 funding levels. Challenged, the legislature did increase funding over the years.

Unfortunately, the increases did not represent a significant increase given multi-year reductions through proration, escalating cost of operation, and overall short falls.

Priority 5, Goal 9 -- This goal considers a key concept of a PK-20 system, but concentrates its emphasis and direction in workforce training with education as a foundational element. Although a key ingredient in economic development, the missions of K-12, the community college system, and the universities remained bound to educational issues. It took consolidation of business and economic services, e.g., ADECA, AIDT, Department of Labor, etc., working with the Alabama Workforce Council (AWC) to create common goals for serving the economic interest of the State by allowing for a flexible and unified effort in a broad range of industry.

Priority 5, Goal 10 -- Statewide leaders at all levels of education and from business/industry are assessing the labor market and the requirements of present operations, and the needs of the future. The State's leadership supported by business/industry is aggressively working to address market demands by combining state resources, multiple agency efforts, and educational elements into a team that is strategically moving the State forward.

With the completion of this five-year cycle (2009-2014), a new plan may emerge to address those areas of continuing need to advance key work elements at all levels, and to ensure success as the State moves to new heights in 2020.

Epilogue

The end of the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan effort presents a mixed picture of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Many of the objectives have been considered and addressed, but not always with success. Yet, even with the failures, there has been and continues to be a dialog among the parties affected in supporting and providing for the State at all levels. Opportunities missed (e.g. PK-20 Council) to successes (e.g., STEM field enrollments, Alabama's Workforce Council) have done much to bring business and education together to improve the State's educational system, business environment, and the economy. The next five years should be designed to take what has been learned to create and utilize benchmarks and measurable objectives, to apply the tools that have been created, and to expand the partnerships that tie us together.

The hope is to use the priorities that have been considered today as a foundation for the future 2015-2020. The completion of the 10th Quadrennial Review provides evidence that a statewide strategic plan is needed and should be developed by a committee comprised of educators, business/industry, and government representatives. The new Plan should utilize the findings of this Plan to set topics and issues to assure Alabama's future.

With the completion of this report, one must consider the benchmarks that have been identified and work from them to address the ongoing critical process for serving students and the State. A response to remedial education needs continue to challenge the State at all levels. The recent data, Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 ([Appendix V: County Comparison Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 of Recent Graduates \(High School\) taking Remedial Education](#)) does little to relieve the need for an aggressive response. Many of the areas are showing more of a need for an increase in remediation support. In contrast, a number of counties have improved. Overall, general enrollments increased, but remedial need students also increased.

A similar calculation during this period is reflected in the number of enrollees at Alabama's public colleges and universities. Between 2013 and 2014, there is an increase of 840 high school graduates, but fewer students actually enrolled in the public colleges ([Appendix W: High School Graduates Enrollment Fall 2004-Fall 2013](#)). Enrollments are hovering around 54% for a ten-year period with a decrease of 5% since 2009 in the community colleges.

In an effort to address enrollment and in some cases the growing problem of remediation, the State's institutions with K-12, and the legislature are emphasizing "Dual and Concurrent Enrollment." This movement to advance students, support graduation, and provide options, while saving money appears to be an initial success. Since 2004,

dual enrollments have almost doubled (2013) within the two-year college system and more than doubled in the four-year colleges ([Appendix X: Summary Dual Enrollments 2004-2013](#)). Additionally, there is an effort and continuing interest in Advanced Placement Courses. The system has shown an increase in participation in the classes that provide a number of benefits, e.g. completion of college credit, reduced costs, and shorter time to degree; regardless of the end testing result; the rigor of the classes help students stay in school, graduate, and improve college options and hopefully completions.

Overall, the issues challenging the State, its educational system, and the creation and support of a strong workforce have been identified. This status report and the existing benchmarks identified can serve as a blueprint to dealing with the next step: 2015-2020.