

October, 2002

Florida Council of 100 Offers its Continued Support for the New K-20 Education Governance System, by Steve Halverson

The Florida Council of 100 continues to support the new K-20 system of governance now being implemented for Florida's education system. Our state now has a system that can achieve the best use of all of the system's resources to reach the highest levels of student performance possible. This innovative K-20 accountability-based system reflects the Council of 100's long-standing principles regarding education governance. As such, the Council strongly opposes Constitutional Amendment No. 11 that would reverse the governance improvements of the last few years by creating a new statewide governing board to manage Florida's university system.

For several years, the Council of 100 has consistently advocated educational governance reform based upon six principles:

- Establish the Governor as the state's primary education advocate;
- Provide seamless movement of students from one level to the next;
- Encourage collaboration, not competition among the education levels;
- Provide clear lines of authority and corresponding accountability to governing entities;
- Discourage legislative micromanagement and interference in academic programs; and
- Coordinate the budget process to reflect appropriate priorities throughout all educational levels.

These principles are competently reflected in the new K-20 educational system. Early indications suggest the system is working. It would be counterproductive to make significant changes at this time, before the new system has even had a chance to fully prove itself. We are confident that the new K-20 structure, designed around the key principles listed above, is already enabling Florida to significantly improve our education system for all students at all levels.

As we look strategically at the future of education in Florida, we in the Council of 100 believe the current education governance model is an effective solution for improving Florida's education system for the following reasons:

First, the new K-20 system requires essential coordination and collaboration among all education levels. This will ensure that a single education system, rather than the splintered system proposed in Amendment No. 11, properly addresses the needs of all students, K-20.

Second, the new K-20 system places accountability and responsibility in one state board. We believe the K-20 governance model will help to break down government barriers within the education system so that education delivery systems can operate more efficiently and effectively.

Third, the new K-20 system promotes sound management principles. The idea of a single education leader (the Governor) with a Board of Directors (Florida Board of Education) and a CEO (Secretary of Education) makes sound management sense. This seamless, coordinated system enables greater communication among all management levels, creates a better understanding of how each level of the education system is linked, and ensures accountability for student learning at all levels of education.

Fourth, the new K-20 system increases authority at the local level. A key component of the K-20 education governance model is to empower the Boards of Trustees at each of the 11 universities with the same level of authority and responsibility enjoyed by our school districts and top-notch community colleges.

Finally, the new K-20 system reduces the competition for resources. Previously, the three levels of education (K-12, community colleges, and state universities) worked as separate, independent entities that competed directly with the legislature for limited resources. The new K-20 model will bring the three systems together under a single board that governs them all and will strategically determine resource needs for all K-20 systems.

The Florida Council of 100 opposes Amendment No. 11—it would be a step backward. There are overwhelming benefits to this new system as outlined above, and we believe the K-20 model is already advancing Florida's education system toward a higher level of quality and increasing its ability to serve Florida's needs. The Council of 100 strongly opposes this constitutional amendment that would contradict the solid education governance principles embodied in the new education governance system.

Steve Halverson is Chairman of the Council Education Constitution Amendments Task Force, and President & CEO, The Haskell Company.