

**Questions and Concerns Regarding the Jobs for the Future
(JFF)/Knowledgeworks Recommendations on PSEO in Ohio**
(Draft – 6/2/06)

While the basic findings of the report appear to be fairly accurate, if incomplete, the recommendations do not follow the logic of the report. In a sense, it appears that the recommendations were written separately from the rest of the document. They often fail to address the issues raised in the report, and overall, if implemented, will be a huge step backward for this successful program. The over emphasis on-offering dual enrollment course on high school campuses is particularly troubling. There is no evidence that the rigor of these courses is on par with college courses. While it should be explored as one other option under the PSEO umbrella, it doesn't make sense for it to be the preferred option. In terms of the report recommendations, our concerns are as follows:

- 1) **New Mission and Purpose of PSEO** – While it makes sense to open up this program to students who are less traditional college students, it makes no sense to define PSEO solely for these students. PSEO has been a tremendous program for students who need advanced and accelerated opportunities. Rather than ensuring that these opportunities are protected for all students, the new definition somehow dumps these advanced students as unimportant to the mission of the Ohio Partnership for Continued Learning (OPCL) initiatives. This is, quite simply, wrong.
- 2) **Limiting course to 8 college courses only 4 of which can be on a college campus.** – How does this make any sense? This is a huge step backwards for students who need to accelerate further or who for whatever reason do not learn well in a traditional high school setting. This is an unacceptable and harmful obstacle to students. While the OPCL was designed to remove barriers, this recommendation throws up a huge obstacle. This solution is all about accommodating school districts at the expense of individual students. Part of the OPCL mission under ORC is to promote “strategies for developing and improving opportunities and for removing barriers to achievement for children identified as gifted under Chapter 3324 of the Revised Code. This recommendation flies in the face of this mandate.
- 3) **Eligibility – requirement to take the OGT --** This will eliminate many non-traditional students from obtaining access to PSEO. It also unfairly limits the program to juniors and seniors. If the OGT is a requirement then every student from 8th grade on needs to have access to the exam. There should be multiple avenues to access PSEO. GPA is not always the best indicator of whether a student is ready. This new set of criteria could shut out students who are not faring well in a typical high school environment. In fact, this population is completely ignored in this report. Multiple criteria should be developed if there has to be some standard for entrance.
- 4) **Eligibility – counselor recommendation for 9th and 10th graders.** – Why? As the report indicated, there is no data to support this is a problem. It is clear from the testimony of students during testimony on HB 564 in May, 2004, that any

approval required from districts typically means students will not be allowed to participate in the program. Districts have a vested interest to keep students out of PSEO. If 9th and 10th graders need to prove social readiness, they should be allowed to interview at the college or have a letter of recommendation from someone that really knows them, not a counselor who works with 500 other students.

- 5) **Eligibility requirements – What does the data say?** -- In the absence of clear data on this issue, it is merely guesswork to limit PSEO students based on the criteria outlined in this report. Given that the recommendations seem to have double standards for dual enrollment courses on high school campuses versus college campuses.
- 6) **Eligibility requirements – One standard requirement for all colleges?** -- This is just unworkable. All colleges are not created equal in Ohio. The same student who might attend Columbus State Community College doesn't necessarily belong on the OSU campus.
- 7) **Course Quality and Crediting -- Limiting PSEO courses to those courses approved as part of the Ohio Transfer Assurance Guide** – Which means based on the courses currently approved -- no math below Calculus, no math at all from OSU, no art courses? This is too limiting. It also clearly is pushing two year programs rather than four year programs. Why? Why not remedial classes in schools where there is a high college remediation rate in reading and math? Certainly, something is not going well in those schools.
- 8) **Limit State Funding for PSEO Students to maximum of one year of eight college courses** – NOOOOOOOO!!!! This is so opposed to the intent of moving students at their own pace as fast and as high as they can go. Why on earth would anyone want to limit students who can handle as much PSEO as they can in high school? There is no point other than to save district money. This is not in the best interest of students or to the state overall.

Other Issues

- 1) The issue of high school credit is ignored in the recommendations.
- 2) The issue of non-public PSEO is not addressed in the recommendations.
- 3) The issue of online PSEO offerings is not addressed in the recommendations, which is odd as this is probably the easiest issue to address.
- 4) Why were parents and students ignored in the review? This is a serious shortcoming which is clearly demonstrating by the anti-students and the recommendations.
- 5) Seems to be a dual system set up – one in which students in districts where there is early middle or early college are offered lowered criteria and more opportunities. This is dangerous path to travel.
- 6) Why wasn't the Florida model explored a bit more?
- 7) Why is there no thought of residential schools for high science and math learners such as the ones in Indiana, Illinois, Texas, North Carolina, and soon – Kentucky and Tennessee?

Suggestions

We need a two-tiered approach: First, the PSEO subcommittee should develop recommendations for things that should happen now. Then, the PSEO subcommittee should develop recommendations that will be forth-coming when we have more data.

Recommendations to Develop Now

- i. Marketing/awareness issue – possibly developing a “one-stop shop” for parents and students to obtain information about all programs offered, deadlines, contacts. Help and support needs to part of this one-stop shop.
- ii. Governance – nobody is in charge of this program. This needs to change.
- iii. Credit issues from college to high school.
- iv. Unfair entrance requirements at some universities.
- v. Online Opportunities – again, this should be more of a one-stop shop experience.
- vi. Encourage dual enrollment program pilots with the newly allocated funds from HB115 and track the data from the programs.
- vii. Develop a report card incentive that makes sense for promoting successful dual enrollment participation (AP/IB should be included as well).
- viii. Data – without a better handle on what is happening with students in PSEO we will continue to build policy by anecdote. This has to be a priority.