

2018

Eleventh Quadrennial Review

PREPARED BY THE

**ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER
EDUCATION**



Eleventh Quadrennial Evaluation of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education

December, 2018

By Dr. Jim Purcell, Tim Vick, and Kristan White
Alabama Commission on Higher Education

This page intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

PREFACE	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	6
ELEVENTH QUADRENNIAL EVALUATION OF THE ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION	8
<i>Survey Findings</i>	9
<i>Conclusions and Recommendations</i>	16
APPENDICES.....	17
APPENDIX A: 2018 STATISTICAL SURVEY RESULTS.....	18
APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PAST QUADRENNIAL REVIEWS	46

Preface

By statute, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) undergoes a thorough evaluation of its accomplishments and strategic planning goals every four years (the last year of each gubernatorial term). For the eleventh quadrennial evaluation in 2018, ACHE staff members conducted the review.

ACHE's evaluation method for this review consisted of an electronic survey sent to almost 300 public four-year and two-year college or university officials, private college or university officials, members of campus or system board of trustees, K-12 officials, members of state legislature, executive branch officials, civic or business leaders and members of the news media or press.

The following report presents ACHE's analysis of the survey responses.

We wish to thank all of those individuals who participated in the electronic survey for this eleventh quadrennial evaluation of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.

Dr. Jim Purcell, Tim Vick and Kristan White

Eleventh Quadrennial Evaluation of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education

Executive Summary

In year's past, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) Quadrennial Evaluation has been conducted by an outside source and was broad in scope. The 2014 evaluation was conducted by AGB Consulting and was based on document review, in-person interviews, telephone interviews, and an electronic survey. The 2018 Eleventh Quadrennial Evaluation is based on data analysis of an online survey emailed to a diverse group of constituents, including postsecondary education officials, members of the business community, state legislature and news media, among others. The vast majority of respondents, over 76 percent, were officials of public two- and four-year institutions, and when private college officials are included, the percentage of post-secondary officials totals 86 percent. This is consistent with the 2014 post-secondary respondent participation rate of 83 percent.

An initial review reveals that ACHE is performing its primary functions well. The respondents see the Commission's most important functions as *serving as an advocate for higher public education* and *administering the Statewide Student Database*. Following closely behind are responding to legislative inquiries, advising the Governor on postsecondary/ higher education matters, and developing and recommending legislation in support of education. When asked to rate the effectiveness of the same core functions, respondents feel ACHE is most effective at *administering the Statewide Student Database*. And, as in prior evaluations, ACHE's support of the legislative process was rated second with reviewing and approving/ disapproving proposals for new and existing programs and operating student aid programs for the state placing third and fourth in effectiveness.

A majority of respondents believe the Commission has sufficient authority to perform its multiple statewide responsibilities effectively and is effective in the performance of those duties. Commission staff are rated most effectively in responding timely to inquiries, being knowledgeable on higher education issues, and displaying positive and cooperative attitudes.

A majority of respondents also believe the Commission balances its advocacy for higher education equally with fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. However, the Commission's efforts to consistently advance or champion higher education's strategic plan for 2018-2030 entitled, *Building Human Capital: The Educational Path to Alabama's Economic Success* with all stakeholders were rated as adequately effective.

Respondents were asked to rate a number of significant issues facing Alabama in providing higher education support. According to their responses, *increasing student financial aid/ decreasing student debt* is the most critical issue. *Educating people for the workforce* and *teacher education/ training* follow closely behind. A majority of respondents also believe that the political environment and structure of statewide higher education are major impediments to the Commission in providing leadership in postsecondary/ higher education.

Alabama continues to face complex major challenges to the continuing success of both its postsecondary system and its economy. The state has done very well in recent decades in attracting new employers, but what is successful today is no guarantee for the future. The continuing focus of the Governor and others on workforce development is a positive for the state, but the higher paying and sustainable jobs of the future will require a more educated workforce with bachelor's and graduate degrees.

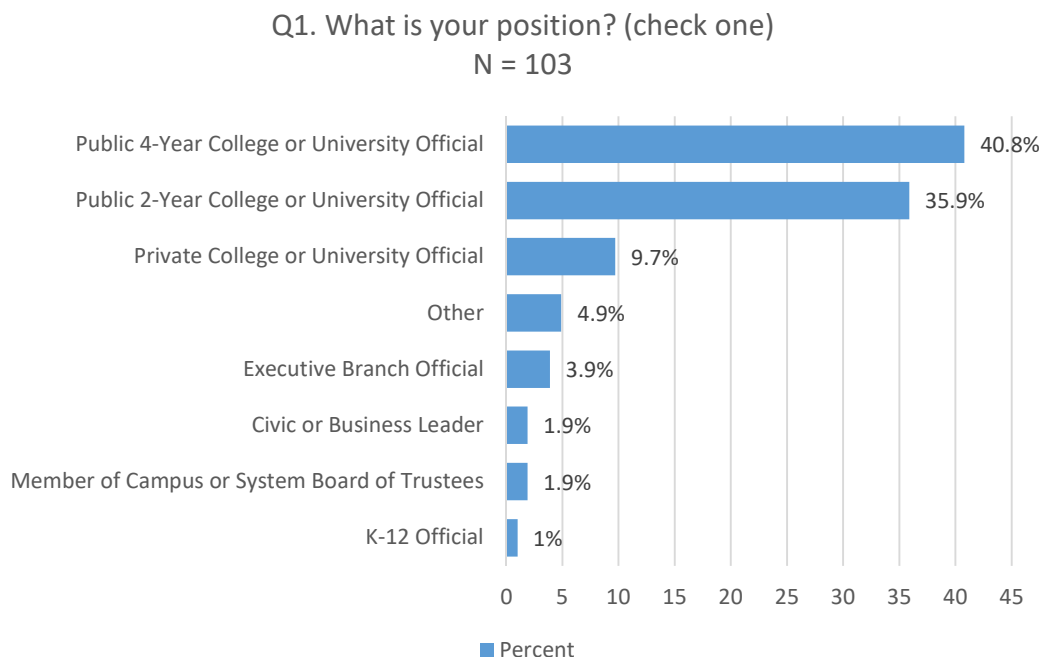
As stated in the 2014 evaluation, it is still vitally important that the ACHE Commission and staff continue to engage the Governor's office, Legislature, leaders in the business community, institutional leaders, and even representatives of the general public so that all are involved in developing constructive suggestions and plans for the future. Having a stake in the process may provide a greater sense of ownership of the priorities and goals of the Commission and the state.

Eleventh Quadrennial Evaluation of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education

A ten-question online survey was emailed to a diverse group of 291 constituents with 103 respondents. The vast majority of respondents, 86 percent, were officials of public two- and four-year and private institutions and is consistent with the 83 percent response rate from the same group in 2014.

The 2018 survey is a shortened version of the 2014 nineteen-question survey. The number of questions was reduced to encourage participation and provide focus on the ones that might yield the most meaningful data comparisons with the 2014 survey.

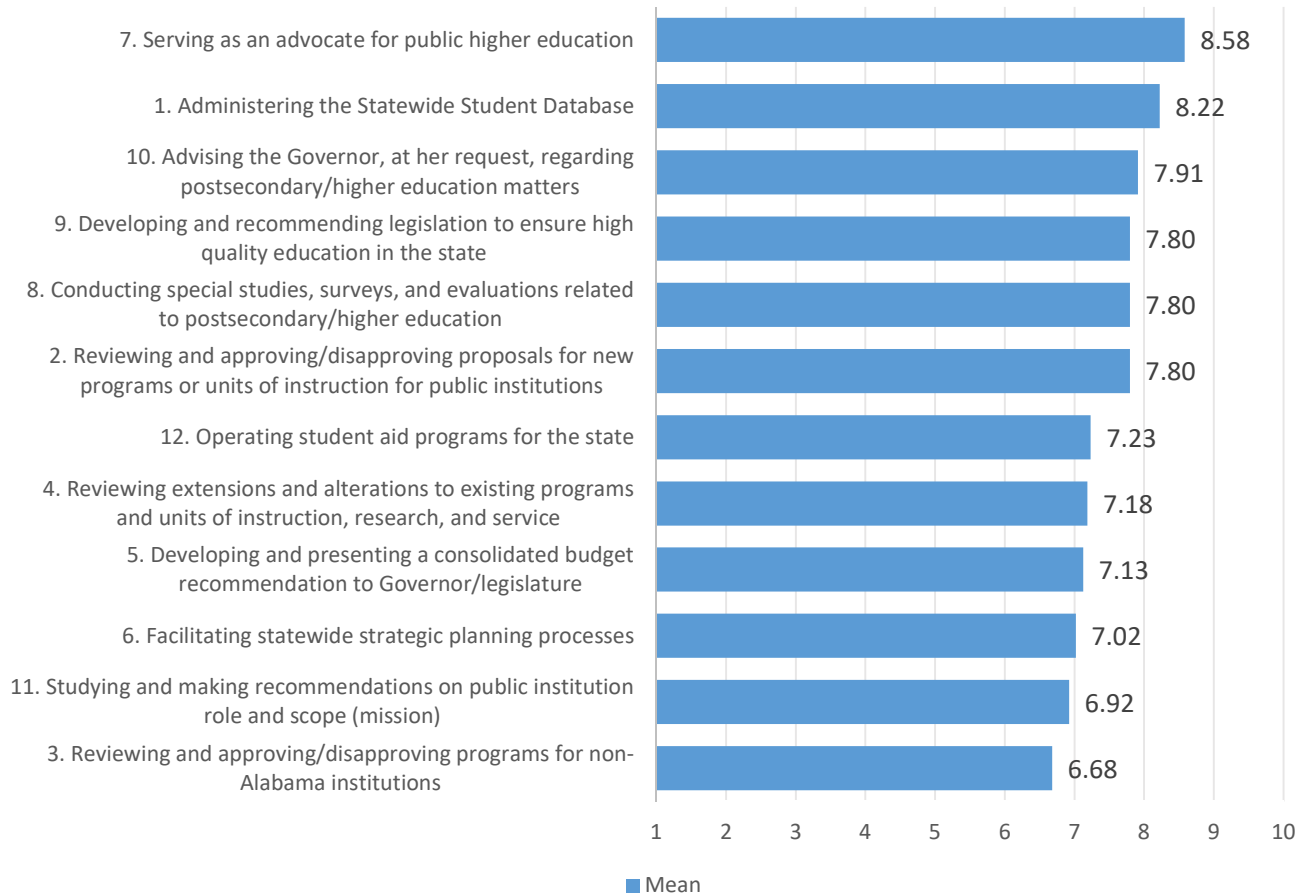
This year's respondent group is summarized below:



Survey Findings

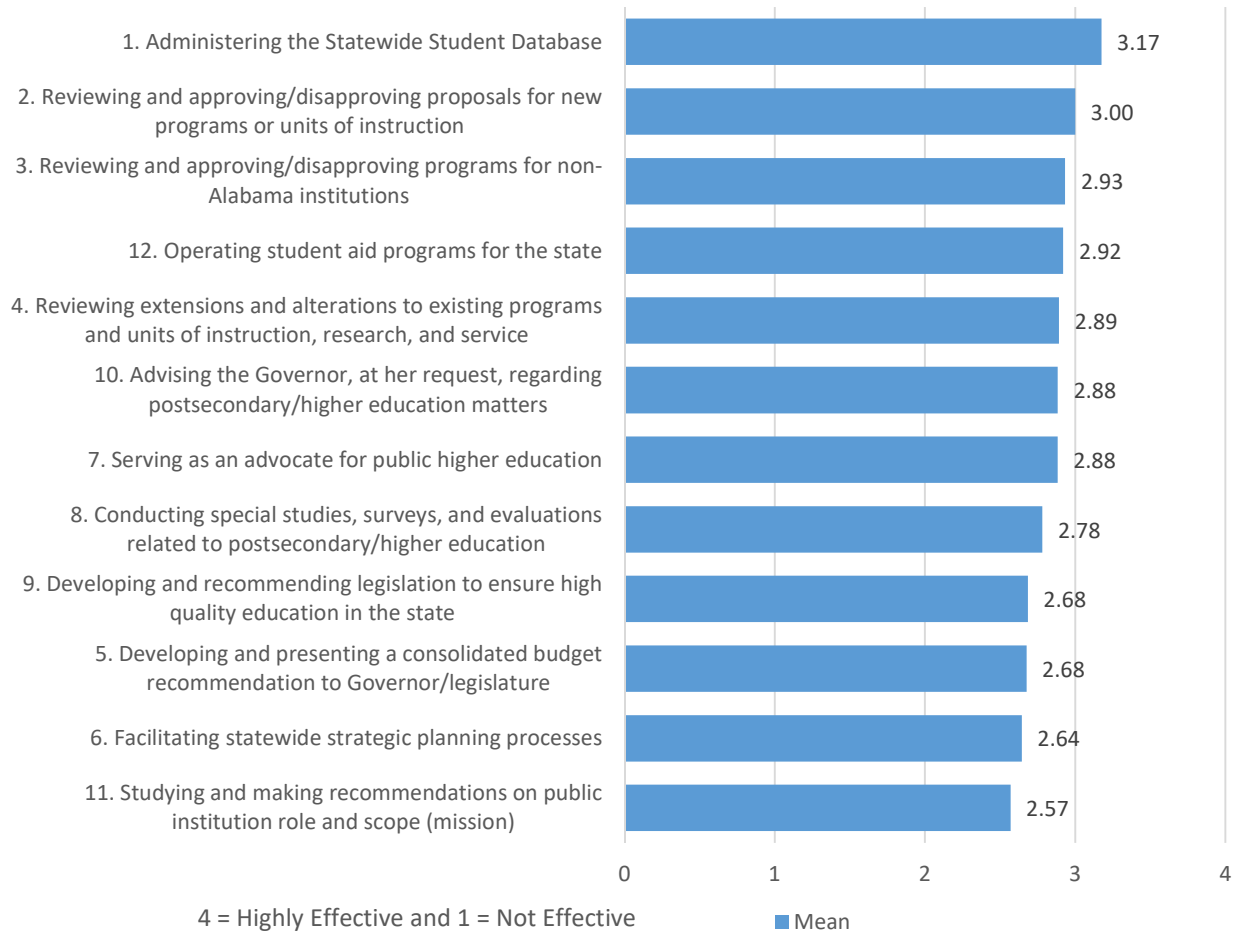
Respondents were asked to rate the *importance* of the twelve ACHE core functions. *Serving as an advocate for public higher education* was seen as the most important. *Reviewing and approving/ disapproving programs for non-Alabama institutions* was seen as the least important. The chart below compares the ACHE responsibilities and the level of importance of each based upon those surveyed.

Q2. In your view, rate the *importance* of the following Commission responsibilities (with 10 being the most important and 1 being the least important).

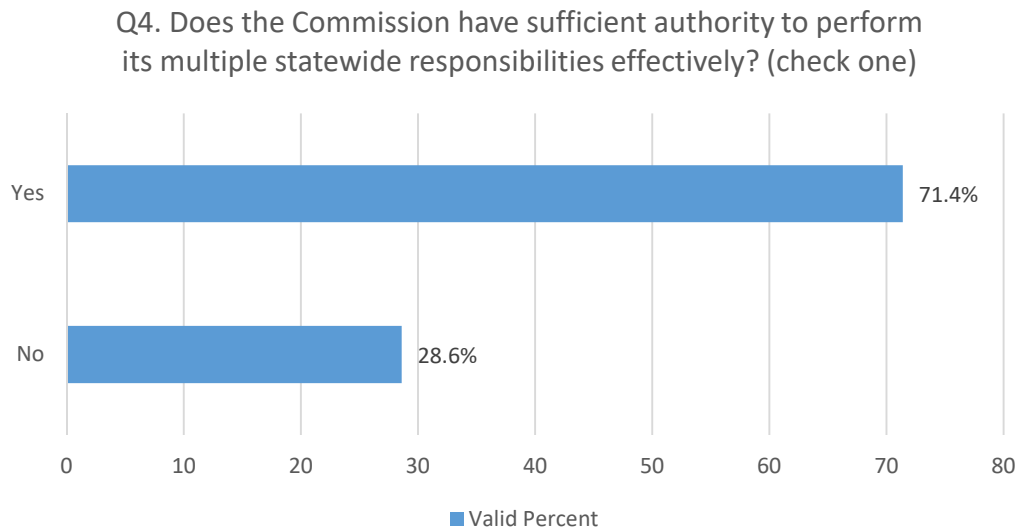


Respondents were then asked to rate the effectiveness of the same ACHE core functions from *Highly Effective* to *Not Effective* on a scale of 1-4. *Administering the Statewide Student Database* was seen as the function performed most effectively by the Commission. *Studying and making recommendations on public institution role and scope (mission)* was seen as the function performed least effectively. The chart below shows the average score for each function based upon those surveyed.

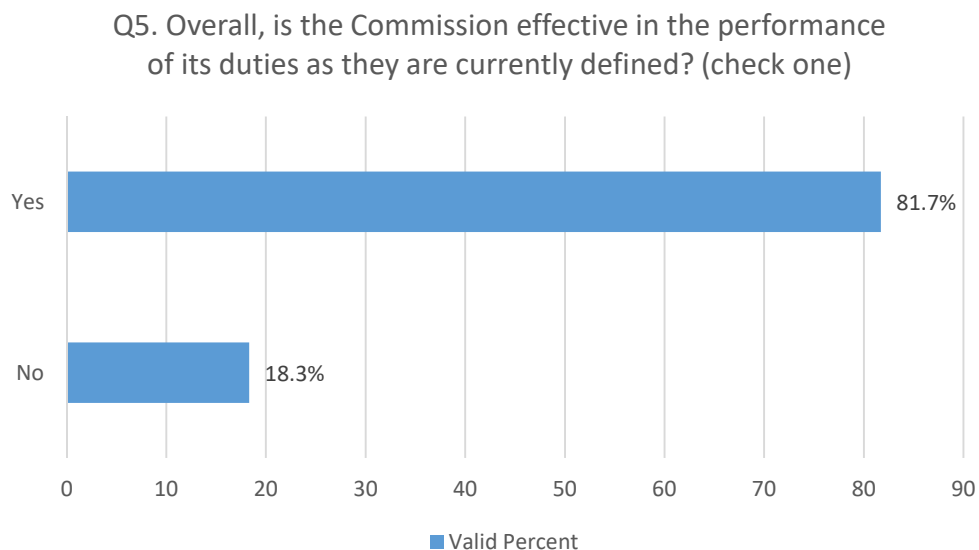
Q3. Use the list of responsibilities and scale below to indicate your assessment of the Commission's **effectiveness** for each function.



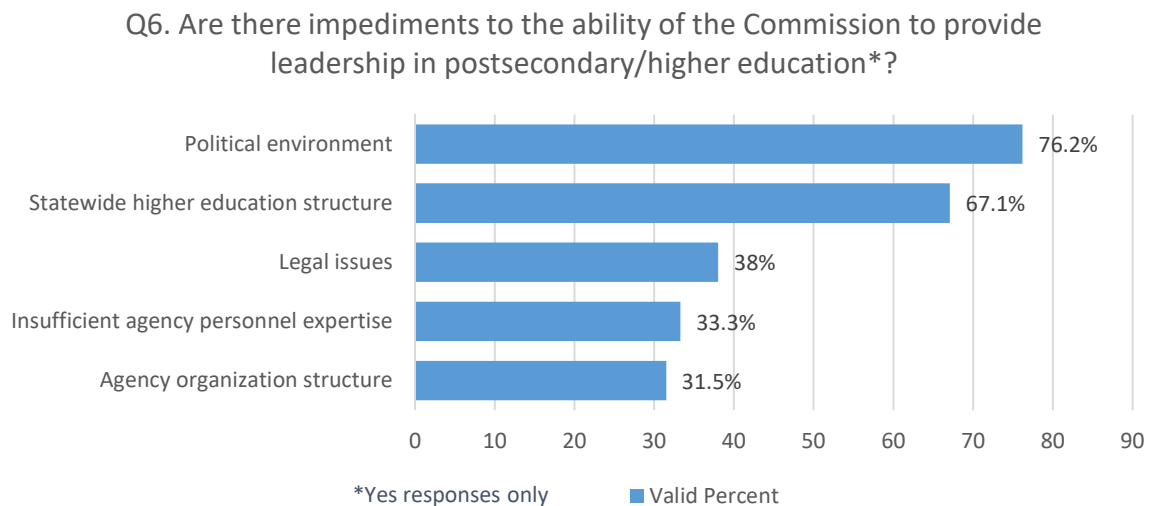
Respondents were asked to respond *Yes*, *No* or *No Opinion* to the question: *Does the Commission have sufficient authority to perform its multiple statewide responsibilities effectively?* A majority, 71 percent, replied *Yes*. This is a higher percentage than the 57 percent reported in 2014. The chart below shows the percent of *Yes* and *No* responses.



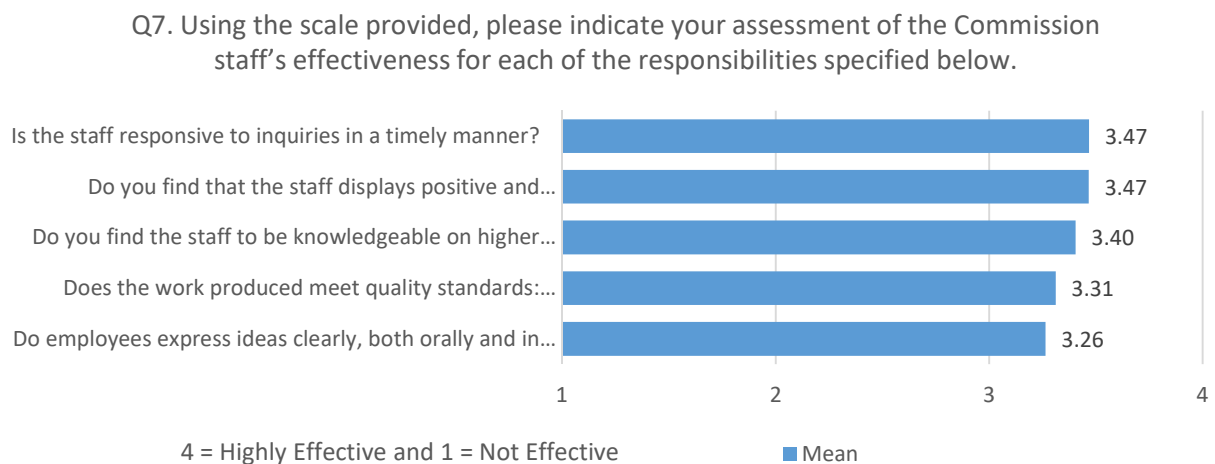
Respondents were then asked to respond *Yes*, *No* or *No Opinion* to the question: *Overall, is the Commission effective in the performance of its duties as they are currently defined?* A majority, 81 percent, replied *Yes*. This is a much higher percentage than the 47 percent reported in 2014. The chart below shows the percent of *Yes* and *No* responses based upon those surveyed.



Respondents were asked to respond *Yes*, *No* or *No Opinion* to a list of potential impediments to the ability of the Commission to provide leadership in postsecondary/higher education. *Political environment* was seen as the most significant impediment at 76 percent. *Agency organization structure* was seen as the least significant impediment. In the 2014 survey, *Political environment* was also seen as the biggest impediment. The chart below displays the *Yes* responses to each potential impediment based upon those surveyed.

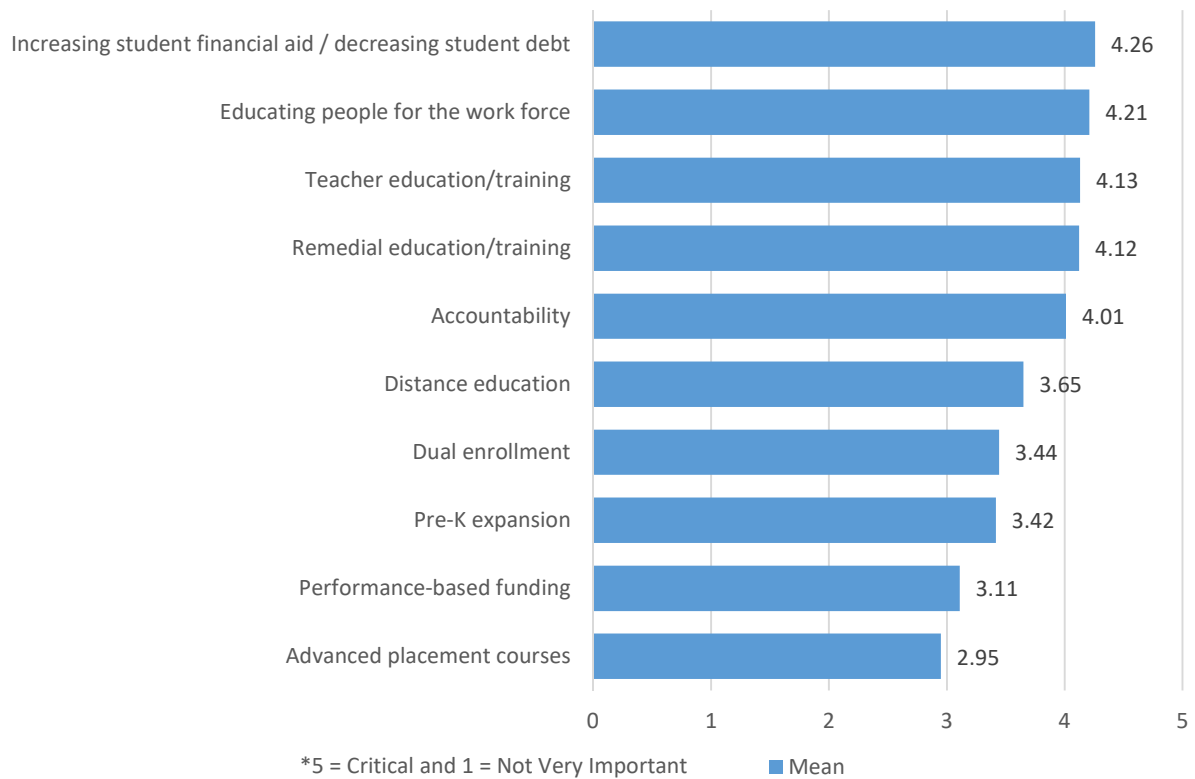


Respondents were then asked to rate the *effectiveness* of Commission *staff* responsibilities from *Highly Effective* to *Not Effective* on a scale of 1-4. *Timely response to inquiries* and *displaying positive and cooperative attitudes* were seen as the responsibilities performed most effectively by the staff. *Expressing ideas clearly and listening well and responding appropriately* was seen as the responsibility performed least effectively. The chart below shows the average score for each responsibility based upon those surveyed.

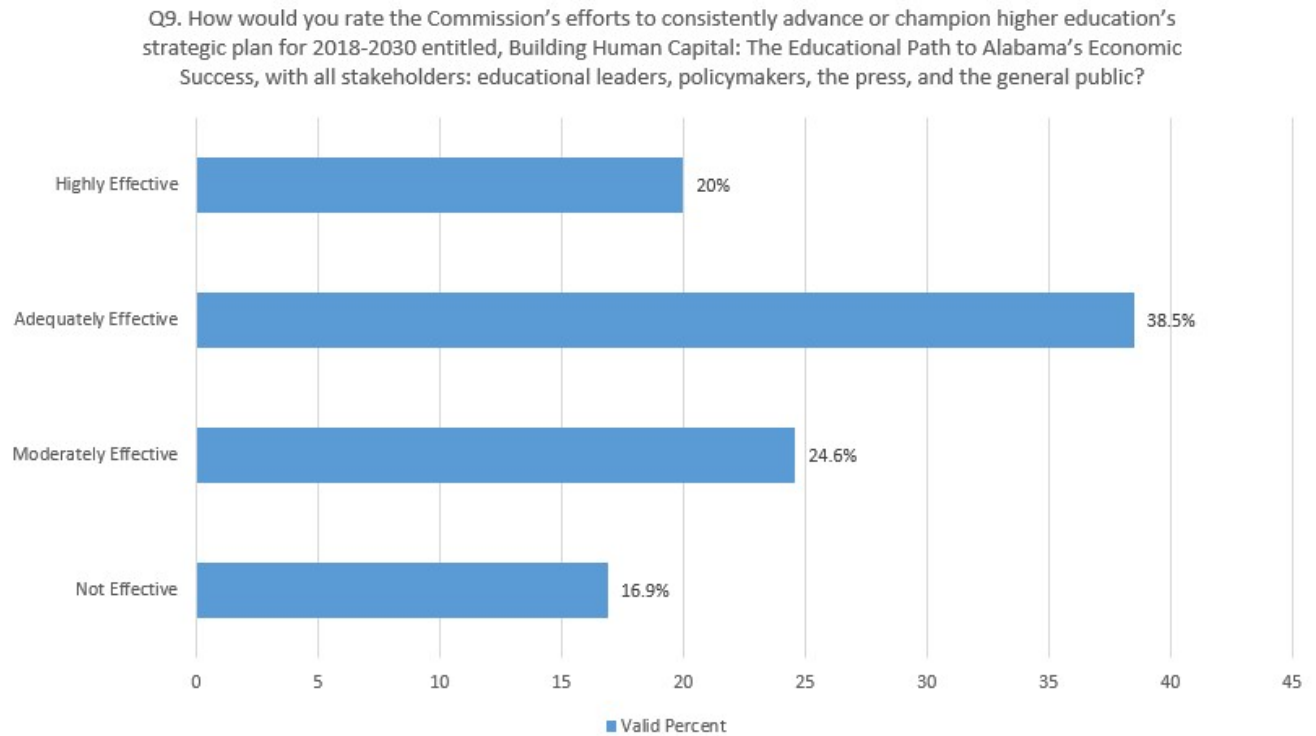


Respondents were asked to rate the importance of ten significant issues facing Alabama in providing higher education support from *Critical* to *Not Very important* on a scale of 1-5. *Increasing student financial aid and decreasing student debt* was seen as the most critical issue. *Advanced placement courses* were seen as the least critical. The chart below shows the average score for each issue based upon those surveyed.

Q8. There are a number of significant issues facing Alabama in providing higher education support. In your view, rate the following according to importance*.

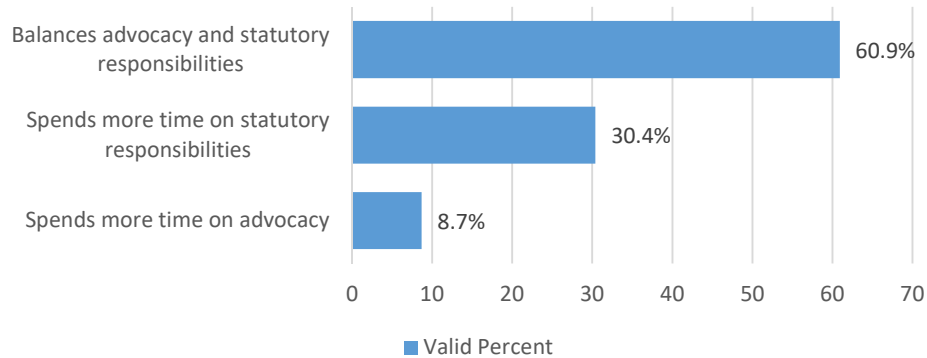


Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the Commission's efforts to consistently advance or champion higher education's strategic plan for 2018-2030 by selecting one response from *Highly Effective* to *Not Effective*. The majority, almost 39 percent, believe the Commission's efforts are adequately effective while almost 17 percent believe their efforts are not effective. The chart below shows the percentage for each level of effectiveness based upon those surveyed.



Respondents were asked if they believe the Commission spends more time on advocacy for higher education or fulfilling statutory responsibilities, or balances both equally. The majority of respondents believe the Commission balances the two responsibilities. The chart below shows the percentage for each option selected based upon those surveyed.

Q10. In the performance of its duties, how well does the Commission balance its role between being an advocate for higher education and fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as the state's higher education coordinating board? (check one)



Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the survey results mirror prior quadrennial reviews. There was greater satisfaction with agency efforts on *Serving as an advocate for higher public education* and *Administering the Statewide Student Database*. Some of this improvement could be related to the ability of the agency to provide greater support to the colleges and universities because of the availability of state funding. In addition, recent emphasis by the ACHE staff to streamline ACHE's procedures, and a reduction and clarification of ACHE policy may have contributed to improved satisfaction. Advocacy by ACHE for budget increases for the colleges and universities and need-based aid and scholarships targeting the shortage of math and science teachers could also be a contributing factor.

Based on the survey results, the following measures are recommended:

- Continue focus on advocacy and coordination of higher education, including affordability and expanded student aid programs.
- Expand services to campuses including professional development.
- Continue to provide valuable data through the Statewide Student Database and work to provide even more objective analyses and reports on important measures such as enrollment, retention, graduation rates and numbers.
- Continue to coordinate with state education and non-education agencies on the development and implementation of the State Longitudinal Data System.
- Continue to investigate cost-saving measures for students, i.e., the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completions and Open-Educational Resources (OER).

Appendices

- A. 2018 Statistical Survey Results
- B. Summary of Recommendations from Past Quadrennial Reviews

Appendix A: Statistical Survey Results

Q1. What is your position? (Respondents were asked to select one response.)

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Public 4-Year College or University Official	42	40.8	40.8
	Public 2-Year College or University Official	37	35.9	76.7
	Private College or University Official	10	9.7	86.4
	Member of Campus or System Board of Trustees	2	1.9	88.3
	K-12 Official	1	1.0	89.3
	Executive Branch Official	4	3.9	93.2
	Civic or Business Leader	2	1.9	95.1
	Other	5	4.9	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

Q2. In your view, rate the **importance** of the following Commission responsibilities. (Respondents were asked to rate each responsibility from 'Most important' to 'Least important' on a scale of 1-10, with 'Most important' equal to 10.)

	N Valid	Mean
1. Administering the Statewide Student Database	103	8.2233
2. Reviewing and approving/disapproving proposals for new programs or units of instruction for public institutions	103	7.7961
3. Reviewing and approving/disapproving programs for non-Alabama institutions	103	6.6796
4. Reviewing extensions and alterations to existing programs and units of instruction, research, and service	103	7.1845
5. Developing and presenting a consolidated budget recommendation to Governor/legislature	103	7.1262
6. Facilitating statewide strategic planning processes	103	7.0194
7. Serving as an advocate for public higher education	103	8.5825
8. Conducting special studies, surveys, and evaluations related to postsecondary/higher education	103	7.7961
9. Developing and recommending legislation to ensure high quality education in the state	103	7.7961
10. Advising the Governor, at her request, regarding postsecondary/higher education matters	103	7.9126
11. Studying and making recommendations on public institution role and scope (mission)	103	6.9223
12. Operating student aid programs for the state	103	7.2330

Q2. Frequency Tables

1. Administering the Statewide Student Database

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	4	3.9	3.9
	4	4	3.9	7.8
	5	6	5.8	13.6
	6	4	3.9	17.5
	7	8	7.8	25.2
	8	22	21.4	46.6
	9	17	16.5	63.1
	10	38	36.9	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

2. Reviewing and approving/disapproving proposals for new programs or units of instruction

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	9	8.7	8.7
	4	5	4.9	13.6
	5	7	6.8	20.4
	6	4	3.9	24.3
	7	8	7.8	32.0
	8	16	15.5	47.6
	9	27	26.2	73.8
	10	27	26.2	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

3. Reviewing and approving/disapproving programs for non-Alabama institutions

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	24	23.3	23.3
	4	6	5.8	29.1
	5	13	12.6	41.7
	6	4	3.9	45.6
	7	4	3.9	49.5
	8	15	14.6	64.1
	9	15	14.6	78.6
	10	22	21.4	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

4. Reviewing extensions and alterations to existing programs and units of instruction, research, and service

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	10	9.7	9.7
	4	5	4.9	14.6
	5	12	11.7	26.2
	6	6	5.8	32.0
	7	14	13.6	45.6
	8	24	23.3	68.9
	9	16	15.5	84.5
	10	16	15.5	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

5. Developing and presenting a consolidated budget recommendation to Governor/legislature

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	10	9.7	9.7
	4	11	10.7	20.4
	5	10	9.7	30.1
	6	6	5.8	35.9
	7	10	9.7	45.6
	8	16	15.5	61.2
	9	24	23.3	84.5
	10	16	15.5	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

6. Facilitating statewide strategic planning processes

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	10	9.7	9.7
	4	10	9.7	19.4
	5	13	12.6	32.0
	6	6	5.8	37.9
	7	12	11.7	49.5
	8	14	13.6	63.1
	9	24	23.3	86.4
	10	14	13.6	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

7. Serving as an advocate for public higher education

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	4	3.9	3.9
	4	4	3.9	7.8
	5	4	3.9	11.7
	6	4	3.9	15.5
	7	7	6.8	22.3
	8	9	8.7	31.1
	9	19	18.4	49.5
	10	52	50.5	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

8. Conducting special studies, surveys, and evaluations related to postsecondary/higher education

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	4	3.9	3.9
	4	5	4.9	8.7
	5	12	11.7	20.4
	6	8	7.8	28.2
	7	10	9.7	37.9
	8	12	11.7	49.5
	9	23	22.3	71.8
	10	29	28.2	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

9. Developing and recommending legislation to ensure high quality education in the state

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	5	4.9	4.9
	4	8	7.8	12.6
	5	7	6.8	19.4
	6	9	8.7	28.2
	7	11	10.7	38.8
	8	10	9.7	48.5
	9	20	19.4	68.0
	10	33	32.0	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

10. Advising the Governor, at her request, regarding postsecondary/higher education matters

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	7	6.8	6.8
	4	7	6.8	13.6
	5	6	5.8	19.4
	6	3	2.9	22.3
	7	14	13.6	35.9
	8	9	8.7	44.7
	9	22	21.4	66.0
	10	35	34.0	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

11. Studying and making recommendations on public institution role and scope (mission)

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	7	6.8	6.8
	4	13	12.6	19.4
	5	13	12.6	32.0
	6	8	7.8	39.8
	7	17	16.5	56.3
	8	13	12.6	68.9
	9	16	15.5	84.5
	10	16	15.5	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

12. Operating student aid programs for the state

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	9	8.7	8.7
	4	5	4.9	13.6
	5	14	13.6	27.2
	6	12	11.7	38.8
	7	10	9.7	48.5
	8	13	12.6	61.2
	9	18	17.5	78.6
	10	22	21.4	100.0
	Total	103	100.0	

Q3. Use the list of responsibilities and scale below to indicate your assessment of the Commission's **effectiveness** for each function. (Respondents were asked to rate each responsibility from 'Highly Effective' to 'Not Effective' on a scale of 1-4, with 'Highly Effective' equal to 4.)

	Valid	N Missing (No Opinion)		Mean
1. Administering the Statewide Student Database	86	17		3.1744
2. Reviewing and approving/disapproving proposals for new programs or units of instruction	92	11		3.0000
3. Reviewing and approving/disapproving programs for non-Alabama institutions	60	43		2.9333
4. Reviewing extensions and alterations to existing programs and units of instruction, research, and service	84	19		2.8929
5. Developing and presenting a consolidated budget recommendation to Governor/legislature	74	29		2.6757
6. Facilitating statewide strategic planning processes	73	30		2.6438
7. Serving as an advocate for public higher education	85	18		2.8824
8. Conducting special studies, surveys, and evaluations related to postsecondary/higher education	82	21		2.7805
9. Developing and recommending legislation to ensure high quality education in the state	76	27		2.6842
10. Advising the Governor, at her request, regarding postsecondary/higher education matters	60	43		2.8833
11. Studying and making recommendations on public institution role and scope (mission)	65	38		2.5692
12. Operating student aid programs for the state	62	41		2.9194

Q3. Frequency Tables

1. Administering the Statewide Student Database

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	2	1.9	2.3	2.3
	Moderately Effective	10	9.7	11.6	14.0
	Adequately Effective	45	43.7	52.3	66.3
	Highly Effective	29	28.2	33.7	100.0
	Total	86	83.5	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	17	16.5		
Total		103	100.0		

2. Reviewing and approving/disapproving proposals for new programs or units of instruction

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	7	6.8	7.6	7.6
	Moderately Effective	17	16.5	18.5	26.1
	Adequately Effective	37	35.9	40.2	66.3
	Highly Effective	31	30.1	33.7	100.0
	Total	92	89.3	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	11	10.7		
Total		103	100.0		

3. Reviewing and approving/disapproving programs for non-Alabama institutions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	3	2.9	5.0	5.0
	Moderately Effective	14	13.6	23.3	28.3
	Adequately Effective	27	26.2	45.0	73.3
	Highly Effective	16	15.5	26.7	100.0
	Total	60	58.3	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	43	41.7		
Total		103	100.0		

4. Reviewing extensions and alterations to existing programs and units of instruction, research, and service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	8	7.8	9.5	9.5
	Moderately Effective	16	15.5	19.0	28.6
	Adequately Effective	37	35.9	44.0	72.6
	Highly Effective	23	22.3	27.4	100.0
	Total	84	81.6	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	19	18.4		
Total		103	100.0		

5. Developing and presenting a consolidated budget recommendation to Governor/legislature

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	8	7.8	10.8	10.8
	Moderately Effective	22	21.4	29.7	40.5
	Adequately Effective	30	29.1	40.5	81.1
	Highly Effective	14	13.6	18.9	100.0
	Total	74	71.8	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	29	28.2		
Total		103	100.0		

6. Facilitating statewide strategic planning processes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	9	8.7	12.3	12.3
	Moderately Effective	21	20.4	28.8	41.1
	Adequately Effective	30	29.1	41.1	82.2
	Highly Effective	13	12.6	17.8	100.0
	Total	73	70.9	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	30	29.1		
Total		103	100.0		

7. Serving as an advocate for public higher education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	5	4.9	5.9	5.9
	Moderately Effective	22	21.4	25.9	31.8
	Adequately Effective	36	35.0	42.4	74.1
	Highly Effective	22	21.4	25.9	100.0
	Total	85	82.5	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	18	17.5		
Total		103	100.0		

8. Conducting special studies, surveys, and evaluations related to postsecondary/higher education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	7	6.8	8.5	8.5
	Moderately Effective	17	16.5	20.7	29.3
	Adequately Effective	45	43.7	54.9	84.1
	Highly Effective	13	12.6	15.9	100.0
	Total	82	79.6	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	21	20.4		
Total		103	100.0		

9. Developing and recommending legislation to ensure high quality education in the state

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	13	12.6	17.1	17.1
	Moderately Effective	14	13.6	18.4	35.5
	Adequately Effective	33	32.0	43.4	78.9
	Highly Effective	16	15.5	21.1	100.0
	Total	76	73.8	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	27	26.2		
Total		103	100.0		

10. Advising the Governor, at her request, regarding postsecondary/ higher education matters

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	6	5.8	10.0	10.0
	Moderately Effective	14	13.6	23.3	33.3
	Adequately Effective	21	20.4	35.0	68.3
	Highly Effective	19	18.4	31.7	100.0
	Total	60	58.3	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	43	41.7		
Total		103	100.0		

11. Studying and making recommendations on public institution role and scope (mission)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	11	10.7	16.9	16.9
	Moderately Effective	15	14.6	23.1	40.0
	Adequately Effective	30	29.1	46.2	86.2
	Highly Effective	9	8.7	13.8	100.0
	Total	65	63.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	38	36.9		
Total		103	100.0		

12. Operating student aid programs for the state

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	6	5.8	9.7	9.7
	Moderately Effective	12	11.7	19.4	29.0
	Adequately Effective	25	24.3	40.3	69.4
	Highly Effective	19	18.4	30.6	100.0
	Total	62	60.2	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	41	39.8		
Total		103	100.0		

Q4. Does the Commission have sufficient authority to perform its multiple statewide responsibilities effectively? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Yes,' 'No' or 'No Opinion'.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	50	48.5	71.4	71.4
	No	20	19.4	28.6	100.0
	Total	70	68.0	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	33	32.0		
Total		103	100.0		

Q5. Overall, is the Commission effective in the performance of its duties as they are currently defined? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Yes,' 'No' or 'No Opinion'.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	67	65.0	81.7	81.7
	No	15	14.6	18.3	100.0
	Total	82	79.6	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	21	20.4		
Total		103	100.0		

Q6. Are there impediments to the ability of the Commission to provide leadership in postsecondary/higher education? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Yes,' 'No' or 'No Opinion' to each impediment.)

1. Statewide higher education structure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	47	45.6	67.1	67.1
	No	23	22.3	32.9	100.0
	Total	70	68.0	100.0	
Missing	No opinion	33	32.0		
Total		103	100.0		

2. Legal issues

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	19	18.4	38.0	38.0
	No	31	30.1	62.0	100.0
	Total	50	48.5	100.0	
Missing	No opinion	53	51.5		
Total		103	100.0		

3. Political environment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	46.6	76.2	76.2
	No	15	14.6	23.8	100.0
	Total	63	61.2	100.0	
Missing	No opinion	40	38.8		
Total		103	100.0		

4. Insufficient agency personnel expertise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	20.4	33.3	33.3
	No	42	40.8	66.7	100.0
	Total	63	61.2	100.0	
Missing	No opinion	40	38.8		
Total		103	100.0		

5. Agency organization structure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	17	16.5	31.5	31.5
	No	37	35.9	68.5	100.0
	Total	54	52.4	100.0	
Missing	No opinion	49	47.6		
Total		103	100.0		

Q7. Using the scale provided, please indicate your assessment of the Commission staff's effectiveness for each of the responsibilities specified below. (Respondents were asked to rate each function from 'Highly Effective' to 'Not Effective' on a scale of 1-4, with 'Highly Effective' equal to 4.)

	Valid	N Missing (No Opinion)	Mean
1. Do you find the staff to be knowledgeable on higher education issues?	89	14	3.4045
2. Does the work produced meet quality standards: accuracy, neatness, thoroughness, etc.?	90	13	3.3111
3. Is the staff responsive to inquiries in a timely manner?	92	11	3.4674
4. Do employees express ideas clearly, both orally and in writing, listen well and respond appropriately?	87	16	3.2644
5. Do you find that the staff displays positive and cooperative attitudes?	88	15	3.4659

Q7. Frequency Tables

1. Do you find the staff to be knowledgeable on higher education issues?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	1	1.0	1.1	1.1
	Moderately Effective	7	6.8	7.9	9.0
	Adequately Effective	36	35.0	40.4	49.4
	Highly Effective	45	43.7	50.6	100.0
	Total	89	86.4	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	14	13.6		
Total		103	100.0		

2. Does the work produced meet quality standards: accuracy, neatness, thoroughness, etc.?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	1	1.0	1.1	1.1
	Moderately Effective	14	13.6	15.6	16.7
	Adequately Effective	31	30.1	34.4	51.1
	Highly Effective	44	42.7	48.9	100.0
	Total	90	87.4	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	13	12.6		
Total		103	100.0		

3. Is the staff responsive to inquiries in a timely manner?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	1	1.0	1.1	1.1
	Moderately Effective	10	9.7	10.9	12.0
	Adequately Effective	26	25.2	28.3	40.2
	Highly Effective	55	53.4	59.8	100.0
	Total	92	89.3	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	11	10.7		
Total		103	100.0		

4. Do employees express ideas clearly, both orally and in writing, listen well and respond appropriately?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	1	1.0	1.1	1.1
	Moderately Effective	16	15.5	18.4	19.5
	Adequately Effective	29	28.2	33.3	52.9
	Highly Effective	41	39.8	47.1	100.0
	Total	87	84.5	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	16	15.5		
Total		103	100.0		

5. Do you find that the staff displays positive and cooperative attitudes?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	1	1.0	1.1	1.1
	Moderately Effective	10	9.7	11.4	12.5
	Adequately Effective	24	23.3	27.3	39.8
	Highly Effective	53	51.5	60.2	100.0
	Total	88	85.4	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	15	14.6		
Total		103	100.0		

Q8. There are a number of significant issues facing Alabama in providing higher education support. In your view, rate the following according to importance. (Respondents were asked to rate each issue from 'Critical' to 'Not Very Important' on a scale of 1-5, with 'Critical' equal to 5.)

	Valid	N Missing (No Opinion)	Mean
1. Remedial education/training	98	5	4.1224
2. Pre-K expansion	91	12	3.4176
3. Distance education	100	3	3.6500
4. Advanced placement courses	99	4	2.9495
5. Dual enrollment	99	4	3.4444
6. Teacher education/training	99	4	4.1313
7. Performance-based funding	99	4	3.1111
8. Increasing student financial aid / decreasing student debt	101	2	4.2574
9. Accountability	100	3	4.0100
10. Educating people for the work force	100	3	4.2100

Q8. Frequency Tables

1. Remedial education/training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	4	3.9	4.1	4.1
	Somewhat Important	3	2.9	3.1	7.1
	Important	14	13.6	14.3	21.4
	Very Important	33	32.0	33.7	55.1
	Critical	44	42.7	44.9	100.0
	Total	98	95.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	5	4.9		
Total		103	100.0		

2. Pre-K expansion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	11	10.7	12.1	12.1
	Somewhat Important	6	5.8	6.6	18.7
	Important	27	26.2	29.7	48.4
	Very Important	28	27.2	30.8	79.1
	Critical	19	18.4	20.9	100.0
	Total	91	88.3	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	12	11.7		
Total		103	100.0		

3. Distance education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	2	1.9	2.0	2.0
	Somewhat Important	12	11.7	12.0	14.0
	Important	27	26.2	27.0	41.0
	Very Important	37	35.9	37.0	78.0
	Critical	22	21.4	22.0	100.0
	Total	100	97.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	3	2.9		
Total		103	100.0		

4. Advanced placement courses

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	11	10.7	11.1	11.1
	Somewhat Important	25	24.3	25.3	36.4
	Important	30	29.1	30.3	66.7
	Very Important	24	23.3	24.2	90.9
	Critical	9	8.7	9.1	100.0
	Total	99	96.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	4	3.9		
Total		103	100.0		

5. Dual enrollment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	5	4.9	5.1	5.1
	Somewhat Important	17	16.5	17.2	22.2
	Important	24	23.3	24.2	46.5
	Very Important	35	34.0	35.4	81.8
	Critical	18	17.5	18.2	100.0
	Total	99	96.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	4	3.9		
Total		103	100.0		

6. Teacher education/training

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Somewhat Important	7	6.8	7.1	7.1
	Important	14	13.6	14.1	21.2
	Very Important	37	35.9	37.4	58.6
	Critical	41	39.8	41.4	100.0
	Total	99	96.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	4	3.9		
Total		103	100.0		

7. Performance-based funding

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	18	17.5	18.2	18.2
	Somewhat Important	17	16.5	17.2	35.4
	Important	20	19.4	20.2	55.6
	Very Important	24	23.3	24.2	79.8
	Critical	20	19.4	20.2	100.0
	Total	99	96.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	4	3.9		
Total		103	100.0		

8. Increasing student financial aid / decreasing student debt

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Somewhat Important	4	3.9	4.0	5.0
	Important	12	11.7	11.9	16.8
	Very Important	35	34.0	34.7	51.5
	Critical	49	47.6	48.5	100.0
	Total	101	98.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	2	1.9		
Total		103	100.0		

9. Accountability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	4	3.9	4.0	4.0
	Somewhat Important	2	1.9	2.0	6.0
	Important	21	20.4	21.0	27.0
	Very Important	35	34.0	35.0	62.0
	Critical	38	36.9	38.0	100.0
	Total	100	97.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	3	2.9		
Total		103	100.0		

10. Educating people for the work force

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Very Important	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Somewhat Important	3	2.9	3.0	4.0
	Important	18	17.5	18.0	22.0
	Very Important	30	29.1	30.0	52.0
	Critical	48	46.6	48.0	100.0
	Total	100	97.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	3	2.9		
Total		103	100.0		

Q9. How would you rate the Commission's efforts to consistently advance or champion higher education's strategic plan for 2018-2030 entitled, *Building Human Capital: The Educational Path to Alabama's Economic Success*, with all stakeholders: educational leaders, policymakers, the press, and the general public? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Highly Effective' to 'Not Effective'.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Effective	11	10.7	16.9	16.9
	Moderately Effective	16	15.5	24.6	41.5
	Adequately Effective	25	24.3	38.5	80.0
	Highly Effective	13	12.6	20.0	100.0
	Total	65	63.1	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	38	36.9		
Total		103	100.0		

Q10. In the performance of its duties, how well does the Commission balance its role between being an advocate for higher education and fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as the state's higher education coordinating board? (Respondents were asked to check one response.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Spends more time on advocacy	6	5.8	8.7	8.7
	Balances advocacy and statutory responsibilities	42	40.8	60.9	69.6
	Spends more time on statutory responsibilities	21	20.4	30.4	100.0
	Total	69	67.0	100.0	
Missing	No Opinion	34	33.0		
Total		103	100.0		

Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations from Past Quadrennial Reviews

ACHE Recommendations, 1999

Change core assumptions to be strategic, client-focused, decentralized through policy tools, quality defined in terms of outcomes. [2006: Little or no change]

Focus on a public agenda for the future of Alabama. [2006: Initiated state plans, but minimal influence; significant progress on information system]

Link fiscal policy to the public agenda. [2006: No change]

Lead a statewide campaign to raise the education attainment of Alabama's youth and adult populations by ensuring greater accessibility of higher/postsecondary education services in all of the state's regions. [2006: Minimal progress]

Develop a new generation of quality assurance policies. [2006: Several positive developments]

Engage in policy leadership. [2006: Little or no change]

ACHE Recommendations, 2006

2006 Recommendations to the Governor:

Appoint a blue-ribbon commission for P-20.

Establish an Education Cabinet, chaired by the Governor.

Convene an annual conference on college and university trustee leadership.

2006 Recommendations to the Governor and State Legislature:

Charge ACHE to develop and recommend substantial revision of current policies and methods for financing higher education.

Significantly increase state funding for student financial aid targeted to low-income students.

Enact substantially strengthened oversight of delivery by out-of-state providers.

2006 Recommendations to ACHE:

Reframe the mission of ACHE from regulatory role to policy leadership.

Shape next strategic plan: involve business and civic leaders, focus on HE contribution to the future of Alabama, include measurable goals and benchmarks, tie budget and financing policies to the action plan, link institutional accountability to plan performance.

Lead higher education's role in support P-12: use a regional approach, use regional data/information, and convene regional forums.

Streamline core functions work, link program review to state plan.

Develop a recommended long-range financing plan.

Give priority to capital needs procedures and financial aid incentives to middle school level.

Strengthen oversight of out-of-state providers.

Redesign ACHE's meeting agendas: monitor a limited set of basic questions, use consent agendas, and aim for 75% of time on policy leadership.

Increase ACHE staffing in strategic planning, data/information systems, and P-12 alignment.

Reassess statutory mandates for data collection.

Establish a consumer information portal.

ACHE Recommendations 2010

- Raising and informing issues in reports and other communications for debate, discussion, and action by policy makers, educators, and the public.
- ACHE's most powerful potential role is to provide information as an advocate for a well- educated citizenry and workforce for Alabama—to elucidate problems for those with the means to pursue solutions.
- ACHE could be more involved with these matters by reallocating resources from some of the more time-consuming and less valuable activities, and by identifying simpler, more straightforward and possibly less regulatory approaches.
- The State Plan for higher education, Forging Strategic Alliances: 2009-2014, should be the guide for much of ACHE's work in statewide policy leadership and in encouraging statewide policy discussions.
- The focus of the State Plan for higher education on overall state educational achievement is admirable. But ACHE should clarify higher and postsecondary's expectations and responsibilities for achieving the Plan's priorities and goals.
- Using the statewide student database, ACHE should produce more on statewide or regional education issues that illuminate policy debates and options and strategic issues for the legislature and Governor.
- ACHE should also seek to overcome resistance and expand collection of course-level data, which is needed to help learn how to improve student retention, streamline the education process, analyze opportunities for collaboration, and other meaningful purposes.
- ACHE should consider retaining new program review only for the purpose of ensuring academic quality, adherence to academic mission, and, where relevant, the state's need for graduates in that field. Program duplication has all but disappeared as a rational criterion for program review in most states; the time has come to reconsider it in Alabama.
- The ACHE process of building a consolidated budget recommendation appears to be a worthwhile process but may be unnecessarily cumbersome. The time required to crunch the numbers should be the minimum necessary to provide credible benchmarks.
- The mandated ACHE capital funding request and annual updates to the facilities master plan appear to be meaningless exercises without state capital support and should be discontinued.
- ACHE should consider seeking the blessings of the Governor and legislature to create a broad institutional-based study group to develop and recommend a strong, fair, and equitable funding formula (or financing plan) that would be used to build the consolidated budget recommendation and fund institutions.
- ACHE should be a stronger voice for affordability and expanded student aid programs. Going forward, using its research capacity, ACHE should bring visibility to institutional and state policymakers on the affordability problem, including comparable data with other southern states.
- ACHE should devise a strategy to revitalize the Council of Presidents through fewer meetings but more compelling agendas.

- ACHE should host an annual or biannual Governor's Conference for the board members of all public and private institutions.
- Commission meetings should devote sufficient time, if not a majority of time, to assessing progress on the State Plan for Higher Education.
- Alabama's new Governor should create a PK-20 Council by executive order, or propose legislation to do so.
- The Governor should consider allowing the executive director of the Commission to sit with the Governor's cabinet. This should not be as the Governor's appointee member of the cabinet, however, but as the head of an important agency.
- ACHE should be formally included on, and participate in, the State Workforce Planning Council.
- To ensure high caliber individuals on the Commission as vacancies occur, a statement of desirable qualifications and Commission member responsibilities should be developed by the Commission as a guide to the Governor and other elected leaders when making appointments.
- The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House need to make appointments to the ACHE Commission in a timely manner when vacancies occur. Doing so will ensure a vital Commission and agency and continuity for policy decision making.

ACHE Recommendations, 2014

We suggest that the ACHE Commission and staff consider this report as input to a thoughtful, consultative process to determine which of these several recommendations, whether from Model 1, Model 2, or both, make most sense.

The evaluation committee was fortunate to benefit from a total of 55 interviews both in person and by telephone. The following recommendations are based on many diverse views and incorporate the results of the survey and written materials, and the evaluation committee's experience in both Alabama and a number of other states.

The evaluation committee offers two sets of recommendations from which the ACHE Commission and staff might pursue either one or elements of both. The first, Model 1, is a continuation of the ongoing quadrennial evaluation series, offering suggestions for improvement. The second set of recommendations, Model 2, proposes reconsidering the statutory expectations of ACHE to enable ACHE to contribute more to the state's key priorities today and in the future. We suggest that the ACHE Commission and staff consider this report as input to a thoughtful, consultative process to determine which of these several recommendations, whether from Model 1, Model 2, or both, make most sense.

Model 1: Improve Current Functioning

Many of the conclusions and recommendations that arise from this year's evaluation have already been made in the 1999, 2006, and 2010 evaluations. These prior recommendations are summarized in Appendix E. Discussion among ACHE staff and Commissioners could identify those on which the time, need, and resources are right for further progress. The evaluation committee identifies 18 recommendations below from 2006 and 2010 that still resonate with the committee and with the interview and survey participants, some on which progress recently has been achieved, as noted above.

2006 Recommendations for ACHE

1. Reframe the mission of ACHE from regulatory role to policy leadership.
2. Lead higher education's role in support of P-12: use a regional approach, use regional data/information, and convene regional forums.
3. Redesign ACHE's meeting agendas: monitor a limited set of basic questions, use consent agendas, and aim for 75% of time on policy leadership.
4. Increase ACHE staffing in strategic planning, data/information systems, and P-12 alignment.

2010 Recommendations for ACHE

5. ACHE should raise and inform issues in reports and other communications for debate, discussion, and action by policy makers, educators, and the public.
6. ACHE's most powerful potential role is to provide information as an advocate for a well- educated citizenry and workforce for Alabama—to elucidate problems for those with the means to pursue solutions.
7. ACHE could be more involved with these matters by reallocating resources from some of the more time-consuming and less valuable activities, and by identifying simpler, more straightforward and possibly less regulatory approaches.
8. The state plan for higher education should be the guide for much of ACHE's work in statewide policy leadership and in encouraging statewide policy discussions.
9. The focus of the state plan for higher education on overall state educational achievement is admirable. But ACHE should clarify higher and postsecondary education's expectations and responsibilities for achieving the Plan's priorities and goals.
10. Using the statewide student database, ACHE should produce more on statewide or regional education issues that illuminate policy debates and options and strategic issues for the Legislature and Governor.
11. ACHE should consider retaining new program review only for the purpose of ensuring academic quality, adherence to academic mission, and, where relevant, the state's need for graduates in that field. Program duplication has all but disappeared as a rational criterion for program review in most states; the time has come to reconsider it in Alabama.
12. The ACHE process of building a consolidated budget recommendation appears to be a worthwhile process but may be unnecessarily cumbersome. The time required to crunch the numbers should be the minimum necessary to provide credible benchmarks.

13. The mandated ACHE capital funding request and annual updates to the facilities master plan appear to be meaningless exercises without state capital support and should be discontinued.
14. ACHE should be a stronger voice for affordability and expanded student aid programs. Going forward, using its research capacity, ACHE should bring visibility to institutional and state policymakers on the affordability problem, including comparable data with other southern states.
15. ACHE should host an annual or biennial Governor's Conference for the board members of all public and private institutions.
16. Commission meetings should devote sufficient time, if not a majority of time, to assessing progress on the state plan for higher education.
17. ACHE should be formally included on, and participate in, the State Workforce Planning Council.
18. To ensure high caliber individuals on the Commission as vacancies occur, a statement of desirable qualifications and Commission member responsibilities should be developed by the Commission as a guide to the Governor and other elected leaders when making appointments.

In addition, we offer the following recommendations for improvement based on our observations and gathered in interviews for this, the 2014 evaluation.

Regarding the Commissioners:

1. All Commissioners would benefit from an orientation to the Alabama statute, responsibilities of coordinating boards, state and national policy in higher education, strategic higher education issues, and the like. ACHE's orientation is directed at new members, but there is so much to learn that all Commissioners would benefit from ongoing orientation and education.
2. The Commission's meeting frequency and duration is currently light enough to expand the time that is occasionally devoted to "discussion items," making strategic policy discussions an occurrence at every meeting. At the beginning of each Commission meeting, a president, elected leader, or ACHE senior staff member could be asked to make a brief presentation on a critical education policy issue facing Alabama, while ensuring that a majority of the time is left for a strategic conversation among Commissioners around the issue presented. Individual Commissioners could volunteer to lead a discussion on a topic of interest.

Issues worthy of strategic discussion include, but are no means limited to: reciprocity in distance education, college completion, minority achievement gaps, college affordability, adult education, and employability of graduates. This would likely entail longer Commission meetings, but it would be time well spent and demonstrate a visible commitment to fulfill responsibilities to the citizens of Alabama. Overall, more compelling quarterly agendas that engage Commissioners on issues of policy will help inform those policies and advance the stature and effectiveness of ACHE.

3. Having an annual or biennial retreat would enable the Commission to discuss and evaluate major priorities both for the Commission and for higher education.

4. Many boards find it helpful to put their own best practices in writing in the form of a short handbook for members that includes key documents such as the statute, but also describes expectations for communication, processes for decisions, and the like. It is particularly important, for example, and as prescribed in the ACHE statute, that Commissioners represent the interests of the entire state and refrain from representing single institutional interests, or falling prey to institutional lobbying or interests before the Commission. A sample "Statement of Expectations" is included in Appendix B.
5. Commissioners with appropriate connections should assist the executive director in relations with the legislature and the business community.

Regarding the responsibilities of ACHE:

1. There is great concern regarding the quality of out-of-state providers in Alabama (both those that wish to establish a presence in the state and those that wish to provide distance education) and some expectation that ACHE do more to prevent problems. ACHE only reviews proposed programs for non-resident institutions and is not the licensing agency (that is the responsibility of the Department of Postsecondary Education) so ACHE may already be doing as much as it can. If concern is great, however, ACHE could consider taking a very proactive consumer protection role – for example, by providing information to the public regarding sources of comparative information about institutional variables such as job placement, net cost, graduates' debt, and retention/graduation rates.
2. The Statewide Data Base is a gold mine with much greater value than is currently extracted. ACHE provides a good deal of data on its web site, and has done several longitudinal studies on various topics. The database is used to create annual Institutional Student Profiles that show important measures such as enrollment, retention, graduation rates and numbers. Along with using the data to support regional and statewide economic development efforts, the Profiles are another good example of the kinds of information that can be of value to policy makers and decision makers.

Still more could be done in the way of statistics, trend lines, comparative, or interpretive information that would be very helpful to policy makers and decision makers. Furthermore, others are unable to access the data to prepare their own reports. Interinstitutional politics and fear of misunderstanding and misuse may account for some of this serious loss of value from one of the few student unit record data bases in the country. Credible, objective analyses and reports on issues of state higher education policy regarding institutions, citizens, and the economy would be invaluable input to important decisions by institution leaders and state policy makers. To provide this critical service, ACHE requires additional staff expertise and capacity, as well as a compelling mandate.

3. ACHE's strategic planning process for the new state plan (2015-2020) should build on the 2009-2014 State Plan for Higher Education by again focusing on major educational policy issues that colleges, universities, and ACHE collectively can and should address. In concurrence with earlier

quadrennial reviews that encouraged ACHE to focus less on institutional needs and more on the future of Alabama, the 2009-2014 plan was a good start on forming alliances to address educational needs and deficits in the state, and the goals within its five priorities should be a starting point to discuss the inclusion of possible additional goals. As noted earlier, respondents to the electronic survey were largely supportive of the number of priorities and their focus.

As ACHE's executive director has stated, the 2009-2014 plan is a benchmark for future action. In that regard, several of the priorities and goals of the 2009-2014 plan and succeeding plans ought to be consistent from one planning cycle to the next, so that in essence, a longer-term "public agenda" for collective action is created. The new plan should have explicit performance measures to assess progress; measures on which institution leaders might be asked to report progress at Commission meetings, and ones that can be used again in future planning cycles. The new plan should also selectively build on and attempt to inform institutional and system strategic plans, including the Alabama Community College System.

It is also vitally important that ACHE continue to engage the Governor's office, Legislature, business leaders, chancellors, presidents, and representatives of the general citizenry (perhaps through focus groups or town meetings) so that they are involved directly in the planning process and thereby demonstrate a far greater commitment to the priorities and goals of the plan once they are determined. Involving these stakeholders directly, was strongly communicated in the survey results.

Model 2: Restructure and Reinvigorate ACHE's Foundation

An array of structural, political, historic, and economic factors exists that, in effect, hold the future of Alabama higher education in limbo, unable to leverage its considerable capacity toward maximum benefit for the people and businesses of Alabama.

Despite changing conditions and personnel, ACHE has not been able to make significant progress on important recommendations of past quadrennial evaluations such as engaging in policy leadership, increasing its focus on improving Alabama's educational access and attainment rates, and de-emphasizing its regulatory role (see Appendix E).

Lack of progress is not, we believe, attributable to lack of expertise, agreement, or effort on the part of ACHE staff. Indeed, we agree with one survey respondent who said that the staff is the best part of ACHE. As implied in previous evaluations and substantiated by the barriers noted in survey responses, we see the issues as systemic, not personal. An array of structural, political, historic, and economic

factors exists that, in effect, hold the future of Alabama higher education in limbo, unable to leverage its considerable capacity toward maximum benefit for the people and businesses of Alabama.

At the same time, the world of higher education has changed dramatically since ACHE's establishment in 1969 and even since the statutory revisions of the 1990s. ACHE is attending to one dimension of such change in its work on out-of-state institutions offering courses and programs in Alabama (and Alabama institutions extending their instructional services outside the state). Another change is the extent to which the economic future of the country and each state depends upon major increases in the education level of the population. That in turn requires educators at all levels to rethink many of their core assumptions and practices and to find new ways to increase the likelihood of each student's success even as poverty, language, and other barriers make it more difficult for them.

Another change with significant, pervasive impact on ACHE as it currently operates is the nature of competition in higher education. Whereas geographic service areas once helped contain competition, the advent and growth of distance delivery have all but eliminated geography as a relevant consideration. While institutions may well be charged with addressing their region's mission-related educational needs, to hinder their efforts to reach out is to put them at a disadvantage relative to all other institutions that are not subject to Alabama state-level restrictions. One way to deal with excess impact by out-of-state providers is for Alabama institutions to proactively corner those markets without state-level regulation.

Relatedly, we subscribe to the view that market dynamics and institutional business models address program duplication better than a priori regulation. If duplicating another institution's program does not yield the expected return, the institution should close it. Participants attest that ACHE's new program review process often results in a better offering, but ACHE's approval is not required for an institution to launch a new program if the Legislature disagrees. Therefore, we recommend that ACHE significantly relax or eliminate its role in approving new programs but strengthen its focus on reviewing the effectiveness and productivity of existing programs.

We recognize that this perspective is much different from that of many people we interviewed, some saying that without ACHE all would be chaos. It also differs from the survey finding that new program review is ACHE's most important function. We suggested our different stance in the 2010 recommendations. Now we are persuaded that the ongoing scarcity of resources and the growing need to leverage higher education for all Alabamians make a compelling case for major changes to enable directing resources and attention to activities and initiatives where ACHE can make a significant difference.

Finally, we are concerned that Alabama's extraordinarily high levels of institutional isolation and competition harm both the state and the institutions. A wise management philosopher suggested long ago that when leaders are in a tough spot their best course of action is to expand their definition of who's on their team.

The primary competitor of a public Alabama university is no longer (if it ever was) another public or private Alabama university. In fact, leading strategists today recommend focusing intently on the people you serve and how you serve them without regard to other service providers.

Whatever its benefits, competition inhibits institutions from collaborating to pursue academic and administrative cost savings. Collaboration allows everyone to tamp down their tuition increases while often times delivering higher quality programs. We asked many of our interviewees if there are any unifying themes or issues that transcend individual institutions and would help bring the leadership together, such as a focus on student success. Most were stumped. This is very unfortunate for the institutions, the students, and the state. The significant state issues reviewed earlier in this report require collaborative attention. ACHE can help convene and support such efforts if its charter limits or removes its regulatory duties.

We suggest that it is time for state leaders to consider a very different approach, one that can be more effective and efficient. We recommend that the Commission and relevant policy makers consider designing a process through which these key leaders can evaluate and revise the current statute, which has not had a comprehensive review in over 40 years.

It is not our intent to increase ACHE's authority. Rather, the outcome of such a process would be an updating of ACHE's responsibilities, an increase in ACHE's flexibility to address new priorities, and thereby, an increase in ACHE's effectiveness.

The statutory review and revision process should:

1. Ensure that any legislatively mandated functions for ACHE continue to add significant value to higher education and the state.
2. Enable ACHE to provide meaningful data and information to inform decisions by policy makers and educational leaders.
3. Recognize and support ACHE's state planning efforts to identify and clarify the major policy issues relative to higher education and the future of the state.
4. Leverage the shared priorities and capabilities of postsecondary institutions toward results and addressing state priority issues that will benefit all.
5. Minimize unproductive inter-institutional competition, seeking strategies that will grow the state and therefore potential funding together rather than compete for each slice of the pie.
6. Clarify ACHE's mandate to educate the general public, institutions, and the policymaker community at large on the value of postsecondary education and how Alabama is doing on key performance indicators and outcomes.

We believe that the above suggested goals will help ensure that the respect and stature that accrue to ACHE are based not only on the quality of the advice and policy analysis it provides, but also on its state policy leadership. As input to this process, we offer specific suggestions below to those statutory provisions contained in the authorizing statute for ACHE that we feel need to be re-examined.

Some suggestions are repeated from Model 1. Many pertinent or critically important statutory provisions are still necessary, but may need to be updated to reflect changed conditions or recent activity, and are so noted. Some provisions should be fully retained as originally passed into law—hearing applications for changes in classification of role and scope, managing the statewide articulation agreement and administering student aid programs, are three examples—and we offer no comments on them. ACHE staff and Commissioners may see additional provisions that require review or updating. We are confident that a number of thoughtful individuals will have valuable ideas for examining and evaluating ACHE’s responsibilities.

Evaluation Committee Suggestions for Statutory Reconsideration

The relevant sections of the code are noted. Appendix F contains the Code of Alabama 1975, Chapter 16, Section 5 of the Code of Alabama 1975, pertaining to the ACHE.

Commissioner qualifications (16-5-2): To ensure that each Commission member accepts and fulfills the current statutory expectations, it should be required that ACHE staff provide a member orientation, and on-going education and development opportunities for Commission members. It should also be required that the Commission develop a list of selection criteria and qualifications to recommend to the Governor and members of the Senate for future appointments, and to update the list periodically. Examples of Commission member criteria and qualifications to consider, include:

1. Integrity, with a code of personal honor and ethics above reproach.
2. Independence from outside influence.
3. An inquiring mind and an ability to speak it articulately and succinctly.
4. Ability to challenge, support and motivate the staff and executive leadership.
5. An orientation to the future with an appreciation of higher education’s heritage (and that of each university or college in the system).
6. The capability and willingness to function as a member of a diverse group in an atmosphere of collegiality and selflessness.
7. An appreciation of the public nature of the position and the agency, including the open process of decision-making and service.
8. Valid knowledge and experience that can bear on college or university problems, opportunities, and deliberations.
9. An understanding of the Commission’s role in state policy formulation, strategic advice, and oversight.
10. A proven record of contribution with one or more appropriate organizations.
11. Commitment to education.
12. An understanding and acceptance of the mission of all state institutions, and an understanding of the role of each within the broader higher-education system of the state.

13. A willingness to commit the time and energy necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of a Commission member.
14. Willingness to forego, while a Commission member, any partisan political activity that could be disruptive or harmful to the agency or the Commission.
15. The capability to provide nine [six] years of constructive and productive service.
16. Overriding loyalty to the state and to the public interest rather than to any region or constituency.

Commission terms of office (16-5-3): ACHE Commissioners serve nine-year terms. The average term of office on other coordinating boards is 5.5 years. Six-year terms could be more realistic and attractive to candidates for the position. Also, consideration should be given as to whether members should be eligible for a second term.

ACHE executive director's appointment requiring senate confirmation (16-5-4): The executive director should report to the Commission; the needed concurrence of the Senate should be deleted.

The executive director should have one boss, the 12 members of the Commission, who select, evaluate, and compensate him or her. The evaluation committee has seen too many state higher education agencies that have compromised the independence of the Commission or executive staff, most often by requiring Governor's approval of the executive director's appointment. State agencies for higher education are most effective if there is a strong working relationship between the agency chief executive and the Commission that is built on trust, candor, integrity, and effectiveness, and not confused by dual loyalties, dual reporting or lack of independence.

Regarding current language to "analyze and evaluate education needs with advisory groups including a Council of Presidents" (16-5-5): Revisions should be considered to broaden the scope and focus on state policy rather than institutional programs. We feel that the statutory language is too narrow and that the added language will be more in keeping with the envisioned role of ACHE. Indeed, ACHE appears most effective now when its leadership provides policy information and options—witness the popularity of regional workforce discussions hosted by ACHE's executive director, supplemented by pertinent data presented in readable brochures targeted at the region.

Making the Council of Presidents optional (16-5-5): The council meets only once a year, often with surrogates instead of presidents. If the presidents and ACHE leadership desire to meet at key times to discuss critical state policy issues, scheduling meetings to do so on an "as-needed" basis may make more sense and be more productive than a single, yearly meeting that is sporadically attended. Opportunities for the presidents and ACHE leadership to meet are also possible in conjunction with other ACHE meetings, such as a statewide trustee conference discussed below.

Advising the Governor and Legislature on state and capital funding (16-5-6):

A more policy oriented description should be written that is directed at the Commission members' collective role and responsibility to advise the Governor and Legislature to help ensure that state funds are used to pursue the best interests of the state through higher education.

Regarding the current provision on statewide long-range planning for postsecondary education (16-5-6): The provision on long-range planning should be revised to say something like: "establish a strategic state plan for the next five-year period focusing on the major statewide policy issues facing Alabama and its postsecondary education system." ACHE should be charged with facilitating a collaborative process to define the top few priorities for Alabama higher education, with incentives for institutions to help achieve the priorities.

Although much needs to be done to ensure a collaborative process and the engagement of top state and institutional leaders, especially as a new five-year plan is about to commence, this change more accurately recognizes how ACHE's planning process is evolving from master planning to strategic planning, especially as ACHE continues to shift the plan's focus from largely internal institutional issues to broader statewide issues that colleges and universities can help address. As noted under Model 1, alignment with institutional and system plans is desired in ACHE's plan, but institutional planning should in no way drive the ACHE planning process, nor should ACHE's plan be a summation of institutional plans. ACHE's plan should seek to inform institutional planning and focus on intended results.

A suggested provision on incentive and performance funding (16-5-6): Over 50 percent of survey respondents think that incorporating performance based funding elements that are agreed to by colleges and universities, should be part of seeking necessary funds for higher education. We assume that any allocation for performance would be a relatively small proportion of the total budget. We suggest that ACHE provide support for the process, but we are careful not to propose usurping legislative prerogative on the allocation of state monies. The Legislature would determine priorities, preferably in consultation with institutions and ACHE, and the Legislature would determine the amount of money for distribution. In addition, we recommend a small amount of money on the margins to incentivize institutions to implement and make progress on the goals of the state plan for higher education in order to make the plan more compelling and relevant. ACHE would distribute these funds in a manner it sees best, and not in excess of a certain predetermined amount or percentage of the annual appropriation for postsecondary education.

Regarding the provision on the student unit record system (16-5-7): The provision should be retained and the emphasis on a student unit record system to aid decisions and recommendations by all Alabama policy makers should be expanded and developed further, but making the data more accessible to analysts and providing data-informed reports for decisions and policies are top priority

recommendations, whether the statute is revised or not. The recommendation under Model 1 regarding the Statewide Data Base is applicable here, as well.

*Regarding the provision to “design and establish a college/university information system, **including a faculty unit record system** capable of analyzing faculty workloads” (16-5-7):* This requirement for a faculty unit record system could be deleted due to scarce resources and higher priorities.

*Regarding ACHE involvement with **new program proposals, program viability, and off-campus program delivery** (16-5-8):* Protecting geographic turf and controlling program duplication no longer make sense; they handicap Alabama’s public institutions from pursuing local or distant service opportunities for Alabama citizens, given that any institution from anywhere has the potential to be a local competitor. Establishing ACHE as a gateway for institutional and program development (a) sets ACHE up for failure, since governing boards and the Legislature can overrule ACHE decisions (already, the two constitutional boards may not require ACHE approval), b) sets ACHE up as a potential adversary of the institutions rather than a colleague in the effort to advance higher education in service to the state, and (c) diverts significant Commission and staff time and effort away from more worthwhile functions including policy analysis, data and information services, and focusing attention and efforts on major state initiatives to improve access, quality, and productivity.

We recommend revising the statutory language to either delete ACHE review of new undergraduate programs and units, or revise the process so that it reduces and relaxes the processing time from a proposal to approval and requires less staff time. Also, the provision to authorize and regulate off-campus offerings should be deleted. Primary responsibility for these decisions should be left to governing boards and accreditors. ACHE program involvement should focus on assessing the ongoing cost-benefit and viability of small programs and tools ACHE could use to encourage or require their elimination when warranted.

*Requiring ACHE to “receive, evaluate and coordinate **budget requests for the public institutions** ... hold open hearings ... present a single unified budget report ...” (16-5-9):* We suggest leaving decisions on operating and capital budget requests to the governing boards, Governor, and Legislature unless or until such time as ACHE can provide a service that will add value to the process.

*Serve as the state agency for the administration of those titles of the **Higher Education Act of 1965** ... (16-5-10):* This provision should be retained and updated or revised as necessary.

*Regarding provision to authorize and regulate **instructional programs or units offered by non-Alabama institutions** of postsecondary education (16-5-10):* Depending on the recommendations by the appointed committee on whether Alabama should join the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) and resulting legislation, as a result of Executive Order #48, this language may have to be updated. Alabama is one of several states wrestling with the issue of

reciprocity. Regardless of the outcome of the committee's deliberations, we feel that enhancing ACHE's ability to ensure quality and value and provide useful consumer information will be of significant benefit and ensure that ACHE continues to play an important role with out-of-state distance education providers, as well as for those providers who wish to establish a physical presence in the state.

*Suggestion to delete ACHE's responsibility for viewing and **coordinating budget requests** (16-*

5-9) and facilities master plans (16-5-15): The evaluation committee heard repeatedly that the Unified Budget Request (now called the Consolidated Budget Request) is an exercise that is time consuming for both ACHE staff and institutional staff and not used by legislative fiscal staff or the Governor's staff. The same holds for the ACHE review of capital budget requests for facilities that emanate from institutions' master plans. ACHE could continue to provide state fiscal staff with benchmarks that show credible funding comparisons from previous years' levels or those of peer institutions.

*Regarding the provision for "such **surveys and evaluations** of higher education as are believed necessary and "conduct a program of **public information**" (16-5-10):*

The first provision should be retained and revised or updated as needed. It relates to the second provision, where language should be added specifically to charge ACHE with designing and delivering policy-oriented reports on a regular basis, to include an annual or biennial "report card" on how the state is performing on key indicators such as education level of the population (attainment), proportion of low-income students enrolled (access), retention and graduation rates (student success), and research activity.

This broad authority could be useful to the ACHE planning process and could include any needed or legislatively desired surveys of the faculty, as well as other critical institutional information or data that can inform state higher education policy. ACHE's annual Institutional Student Profiles, which emanate from ACHE's student database, provide important data (both institutional and aggregated statewide) on enrollment, retention, and completion. For an annual or biennial report card, the Profiles could be supplemented by performance measures for the priorities and goals of the five-year state plans for higher education (such as the number of degrees in STEM fields), and by other data such as research activity and degree attainment of the state's population (which can be attained from primary sources such as the National Science Foundation and the U. S Census).

The purpose of any assessment should be to improve future performance, and what appears lacking in ACHE's annual Profiles is trend data and analysis that compares one year to the next and change or progress over multiple years. A report card should have this comparative data and analysis. It should be stressed that a report card should be primarily an assessment of the state and not individual institutions, although individual institutions could still be identified in the report card if and when necessary, as they are in the current Institutional Student Profiles. Alternative approaches to a report card are also possible. Similar to the areas assessed in *Measuring Up*, the National Report Card on Higher Education from the

National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education that was issued from 2000 to 2008, the questions are:

- Are Alabama students ready for college-level learning and a high skill workforce?
- Are Alabama students progressing through the education pipeline from 9th grade to a college degree or postsecondary certificate?
- Are they completing high school ready for college-level learning, entering college, and persisting to graduation?
- Are Alabama students completing certificates and degrees, especially in areas critical to the state's and each region's economies?
- Is the state's investment in R&D linked to the future competitiveness of the state and each of its regions?
- Is college affordable for all Alabamians in relationship to their ability to pay?

Interestingly, and as noted in the 2006 report of the eighth quadrennial review committee, the State Plan for Higher Education 2003-2004 to 2007-2008 placed the state's performance in a national context using the data generated about Alabama for *Measuring Up 2004*.

*Quadrennial Committee to **evaluate the Commission** (16-5-12):* We recommend that the Commission be encouraged to evaluate itself annually, in addition to the quadrennial evaluation and the annual report to the Governor and Legislature.

The annual written report to the Legislature and the Governor on the activities of the Commission and the state of higher education, combined with the quadrennial review, provide a substantive examination of the work and performance of ACHE. Effective boards and commissions also evaluate their own performance annually. A comprehensive self-evaluation (facilitated by a neutral third-party at a Commission retreat) would enable Commissioners to understand and address much more thoroughly their strengths and weaknesses as a collective body. Therefore, the evaluation team suggests that language be added that encourages, but does not mandate, a self-evaluation. Periodic self-evaluations could also happen without any change in the Code.

*ACHE's **relationship to governing boards** (16-5-13):* The evaluation committee suggests that ACHE be charged with hosting an annual or biennial statewide conference for the state's college and university trustees. Fourteen state coordinating agencies are conducting such conferences (trustees of private colleges and universities in Arkansas, Kentucky and Missouri are invited to join their public board member counterparts) and they are particularly beneficial in states with multiple governing boards where topics like board responsibilities, the state fiscal and budget outlook, and state education policy issues are examined and discussed. ACHE has hosted occasional trustee conferences in past years and compelling issues in the state call for an annual or biennial conference that can be a forum for communication and interaction among ACHE Commissioners, presidents, chancellors, and the college and university trustees.

*Requiring ACHE to **review the master plans** of each institution and shall make known any concerns and/or recommendations (16-5-15):* We suggest leaving decisions on facilities and master plans to the governing boards unless or until such time as ACHE can provide a service that will add value to the process.

*Regarding the provision creating a **steering committee on college participation** (16-5-30):* This could be modified to charge ACHE with conducting an annual forum, meeting, or conference on participation, retention, and completion that would be advised by a broad-based advisory committee selected by the Commission. The event could be held separately or in conjunction with another ACHE conference.

*Enter into a contract with a state educational institution to establish a **Postsecondary Education Communication Center** to operate a statewide computer network and to perform the functions prescribed in this section (16-5-32):* This provision should be revised, deleted or updated as necessary.

Conclusion

In closing, the evaluation committee wishes to emphasize the following:

1. If ACHE and the state choose Model 1, the ACHE Commission and staff should carefully review past recommendations and those offered here to select only those that they believe add value and do not face significant barriers to implementation. Those few goals should be memorialized in a formal document with specific outcome expectations, and the Commission should review progress on those commitments at every meeting.
2. The issues that cause us to propose statutory revisions in Model 2 are systemic. They are not the fault of any individual or organization. If ACHE and the state choose to pursue Model 2, the appropriate process would rely heavily on discussions that include representatives of all the key stakeholders and on the expertise and best judgment of the ACHE staff.
3. If the statute is revised, we suggest that it not be done piecemeal, and that adequate time for deliberation and consultation be set aside to prepare the revisions.
4. We strongly recommend that any revisions in ACHE duties confirm the fundamental premise that there will be no reductions in staff size and that existing staff will have opportunities to re-tool if/as needed. Alabama higher education needs what this staff can provide, and their experience and relationships in the system are invaluable.