



Reach Higher, AMERICA

OVERCOMING CRISIS IN THE U.S. WORKFORCE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS OVERHAULING THE ADULT EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SKILLS SYSTEM. WHAT DOES THIS NEW DOMESTIC “MARSHALL PLAN” INCLUDE?

- Transforming current services into a comprehensive, integrated Adult Education and Workforce Skills System that can effectively serve 20 million American adults annually by the year 2020.
- Resetting the mission of this new System to attaining readiness for postsecondary and workforce training.
- Improving system infrastructure and with an additional public investment reaching \$20 billion by 2020, plus additional support and involvement from philanthropy and business.

HOW DOES THE COMMISSION PROPOSE FUNDING THE NEW DOMESTIC “MARSHALL PLAN”?

The Commission calls for federal and state funding of \$20 billion a year by 2020 to be achieved incrementally over 12 years. Additional funding must also come from corporate and private philanthropy. The Commission recommends that Congress establish a National Trust or National Training Fund and that technology be fully deployed to help achieve enrollment goals and produce cost savings.

WHICH ADULTS COMPRISE THE 88 - 90 MILLION AMERICANS NOT PREPARED TO MEET TODAY’S ECONOMIC DEMANDS?

The Commission’s final report, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*, quoted findings from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) that 18.2 million English speaking adults lack a high school diploma, more than 51.3 million English speaking adults hold a high school diploma but have not been to college, and 18.4 million adults have limited English skills (with about 13.2 million of these English as a Second Language (ESL) adults overlapping the other two groupings).

HOW DID THE COMMISSION DETERMINE THAT ENROLLING 20 MILLION ADULTS ANNUALLY BY 2020 WILL BE SUFFICIENT?

The Commission calls for a dramatic buildup that can be achieved incrementally over a period of several years. The 2020 goal allows twelve years for that growth and is a goal that the Commission considers realistic.

CONSIDERING THAT 88 - 90 MILLION ADULTS NEED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND/OR JOB TRAINING, HOW DOES THE COMMISSION RECOMMEND INCREASING BOTH CAPACITY AND ENROLLMENT?

Today, many adult education programs are ill-equipped to meet the demand. For example, ESL programs had the highest enrollment among adult education programs, but the demand continues to outstrip the capacity. Several states report wait times of up to three years. Through better funding, aligned curricula and programs, support services, a comprehensive public awareness program, dramatic expansion of professional training and service opportunities, and a more active and direct involvement of business leaders and governors, adult students can be better served and reached in far greater number.

DEFINE “MIDDLE SKILL” AND WHERE THE DEMAND IS FOR THESE WORKERS.

“Middle Skill” jobs require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that between 2004 and 2014, 24 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations will require workers with postsecondary education or training and about 40% of job openings over the next decade will require these skills. Previous studies have projected that at least some education beyond high school is needed for jobs in the 21st century.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT IF THE COMMISSION’S PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED?

Overall, we will see increased voter participation and volunteerism, stronger civic engagement, learning gains for our children, lower crime and incarceration rates, stronger healthcare, greater personal income, and improved fiscal contributions to local, state, and federal government as higher education levels lift people into higher paying jobs. Specifically:

- If 4 million high school dropouts were to earn a diploma by 2020, the net fiscal benefit to federal, state, and local governments will exceed \$25 billion.
- Adults with a bachelor degree are 2.4 times more likely to vote than those with a high school diploma.
- Children’s learning achievement improves in proportion to their parents’ level of education.
- Increasing the high school completion rate by just 1% for all incarcerated men aged 20-60 would save the United States up to \$1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime.
- The lack of health literacy – being able read and fill out medical forms, communicate with healthcare providers, and follow basic medical instructions – costs the U.S. between \$106 billion to \$238 billion annually. This cost is equal to that of insuring every one of the more than 47 million persons who lacked coverage in the U.S. in 2006.