

Council on Postsecondary Education
Kentucky Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
May 20, 2009
Robert L. King, President
Remarks

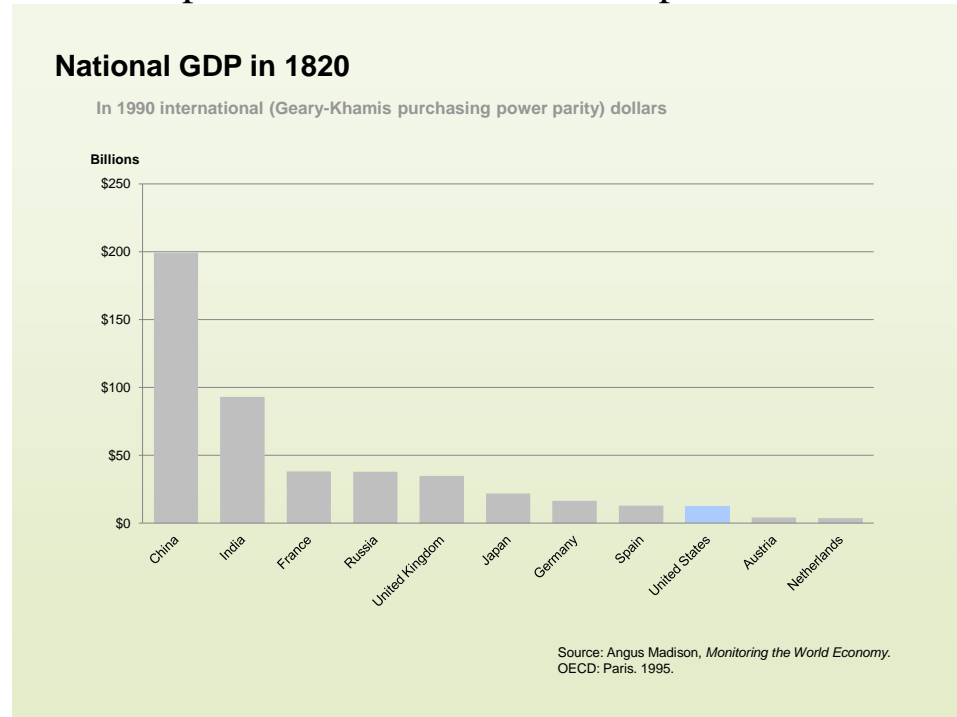
First, let me thank Adina for this opportunity to speak to you, and take a moment to specifically recognize Mike Seelig, our interim Vice President for Academic Affairs. Mike has been on loan to CPE for the past eight months and had made a profound, positive impact on our work, and on our relationship with our campuses. He has recognized our need to be less mysterious, and more connected to all of you. He has established an internship program where faculty from many of our campuses are spending a semester at CPE, learning about what we do and educating us about what you do and how we can help. In addition, Mike has recognized the importance of getting our staff out to your campuses to actually see and understand the unique circumstances and dynamics of each of our campuses and the communities they serve. Sadly, Mike has chosen his wife and his beloved Morehead campus over CPE. So we will be losing him, but doing so with enormous gratitude for his leadership and keen insights, and for the positive changes he has implemented in the way we do business with all of you.

When I was first appointed Chancellor of the State University of New York nearly ten years ago, I attended a speech by the President of Duke University, Dr. Nan Keohane. In her speech she recounted that access to higher education in the United States had been, since the American Civil War, an anomaly in the world. While attendance at a University in Europe and Asia had historically been reserved for the sons of wealthy or politically connected families, the U.S. had chosen a different path, expanding access to anyone with the intellectual talent and determination to seek a college education. This notion of making higher education accessible to all did not occur in a single moment of

enlightenment. The principle was imbedded in a series of actions taken at both the national and state level. It started in the 1860's with the first Morrill Act which created America's "Land Grant Colleges," and continued through the creation of the GI Bill at the end of World War II, the great civil rights laws of the 1960's, and the ongoing support of publicly financed tuition assistance programs, and low interest college loans. All of these public policies, expressed in our laws, have worked together to give real meaning and substance to the notion of nearly unfettered access to higher education to anyone in America who seeks it.

Dr. Keohane's observations about access caused me to ask whether or not there was a connection between this fact and the growth of the American economy? To answer the question I enlisted the assistance of a colleague, Dr. Isaac Ehrlich at the University of Buffalo, to help with the research. Part of what follows is a reflection of that research.

Let me start by asking you to sit back and imagine there was a G-8 in the year 1820. Had there been, the U.S. would not have been a member. The economic and military powers of the day would have included England, Russia, Japan, China, France, India, Spain, and Austria.



Imagine also that their leaders have assembled for their annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. Anti-globalization protesters had not yet been invented, but I know you can imagine all the pomp and ceremony as the Kings of England, France and Spain, the Emperors of Japan and China, and the Czar get together over cocktails. Czar Alexander leans over to King Louis XVIII and says: “So, Lou, what do you think we can do, either collectively or individually, to become relatively less prosperous and less powerful over the next couple hundred years?”

Obviously, such a conversation never took place, but that hypothetical suggestion is exactly what happened. In contrast, during that same period the United States grew from being a modest experiment into the economic and military power it is today. This result, however, was not a foregone conclusion or some predetermined outcome of history. I doubt anyone could have imagined back in 1820 such a remarkable story unfolding.

Consider, as well, the fact that all of the nations in the 1820 version of the G-8 were blessed with large populations, access to natural resources (either indigenously or through conquest), financial capital, established universities, established armies and various types of functioning economies. And none of the largest national economies of the day intended to relinquish their relative positions of wealth and power. So what happened? And why?

Professor Ehrlich’s research and my questions led us to study the public policy choices made in each of these nations, contrast them with policy choices made in the U.S., and to measure their economic impact simply expressed as the change in the size of each nation’s Gross Domestic Product over time.

The research led us to three principal factors which differentiated the behavior of the U.S. economy from those of the nineteenth century G-8 nations.

First, the U.S. embraced a free enterprise economy while the members of the old G-8 were experimenting with communism, and socialism, or perpetuating old systems of feudalism.

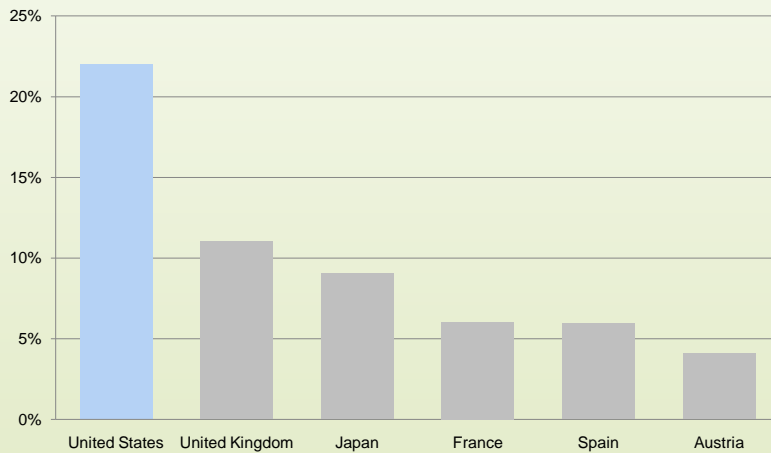
Second, the United States made secondary education (grades 9-12) universal in the early 1900's, nearly forty years before any other nation.

And third, access to higher education was significantly broadened to people of all economic and social classes through a series of laws described earlier, bringing the treasure of higher education within reach of nearly every American who need only demonstrate the motivation to seek it.

My colleague, Isaac, is an advocate of what economist describe as the “Endogenous Theory” of growth. He contends that, “The reason persistent growth is enabled by human capital formation is that human capital, unlike conventional physical capital, has both the direct effect on the productivity of current labor and capital inputs, and an indirect effect on the production of more knowledge. **A continuous accumulation of knowledge can thus lead to a self-sustaining growth in per capita income.**”

Using international OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) data assembled in 2008 on educational attainment some startling differences appear.

Baccalaureate attainment in the 25-34 age cohort, 1968



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance 2008*, table A1.3a, estimated by the 1998 values for the 55-64 age cohort.

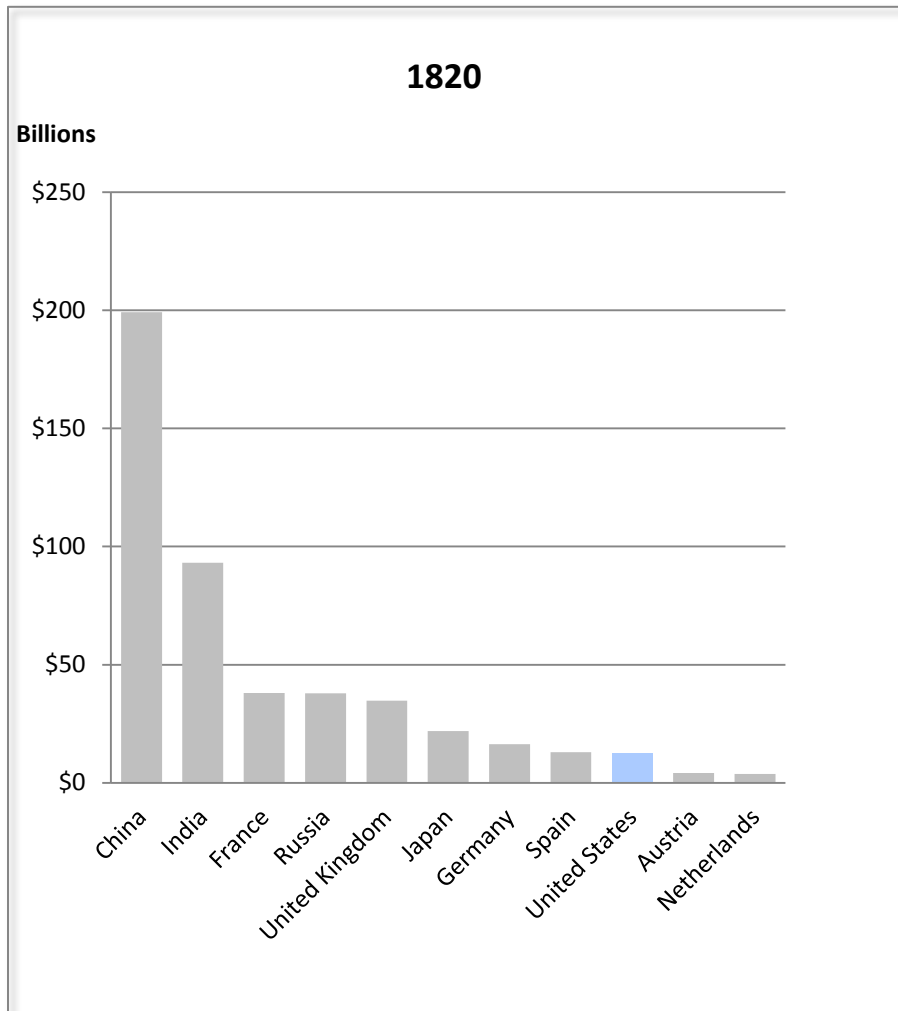
When I graduated from college in the late 1960's, nearly 22% of Americans in my age group had a Bachelors degree or higher. That compares to 11% in England, 6% for France, 9% in Japan, 6% in Spain, etc. I must confess that I had never expected to see differences of this magnitude. When you multiply this difference across the span of an entire workforce, the differences in productivity, especially in an increasingly information based world, clearly explain how the U.S. grew so substantially, particularly in the 20th century.

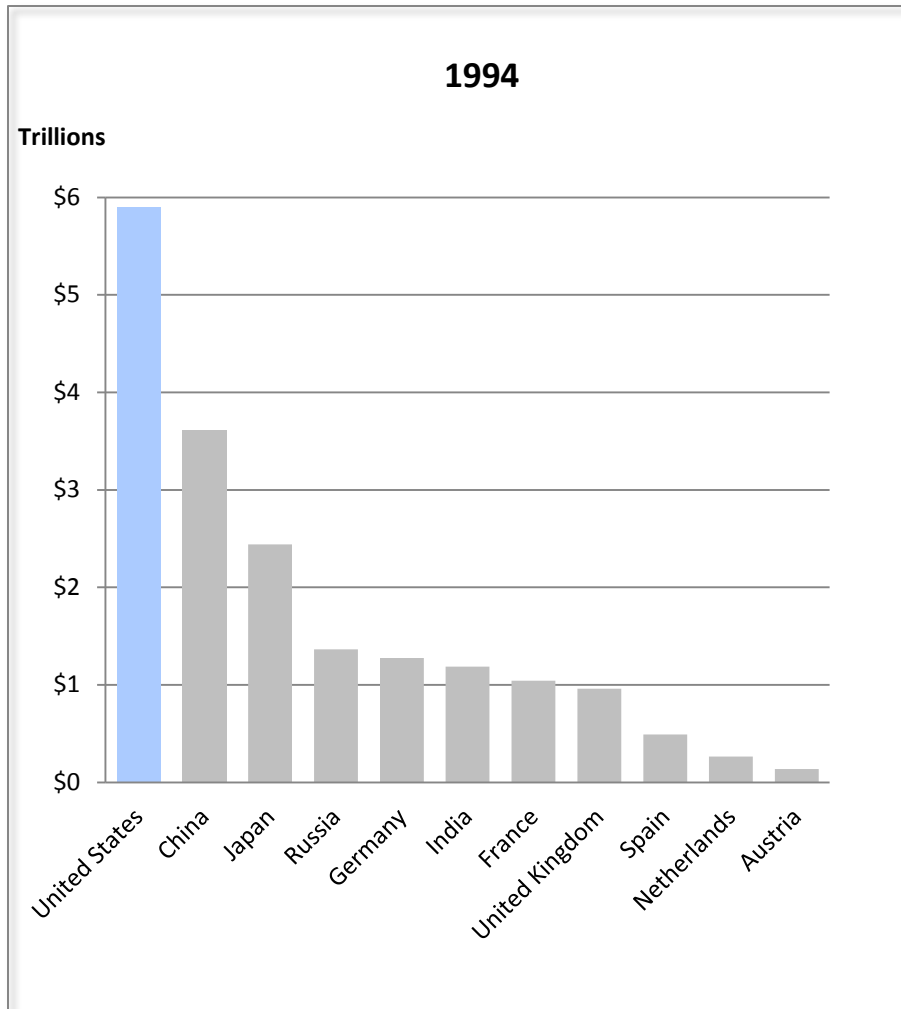
In the U.S., it was not just the CEO or the company owner that possessed a college degree. In many instances, it was the Human Resources professional, the marketing manager, the engineers on the factory floor, and the sales force that had bachelor's degrees as well. Even the machinist operating highly sophisticated pieces of manufacturing equipment will very likely have earned at least an Associate's Degree from one of our community colleges.

The point is that America's workforce has historically been more highly educated than any other nation in the world, and that education has

translated into more innovation and productivity than any other nation throughout the twentieth century. Dr. Ehrlich has actually concluded that, "... the U.S. lead in educational attainments over the 20th century has been a major factor, and perhaps THE major factor, that accounts for the U.S. overtaking Europe as the economic superpower of the 20th Century."

I asked Professor Ehrlich if we could measure the difference in the growth of GDP during the period 1820 to 2000. While this was somewhat difficult to do given the differences in currencies and exchange rates, especially going back into the nineteenth century, he was able to come up with a reasonable representation, measured in constant 1990 U.S. dollars.



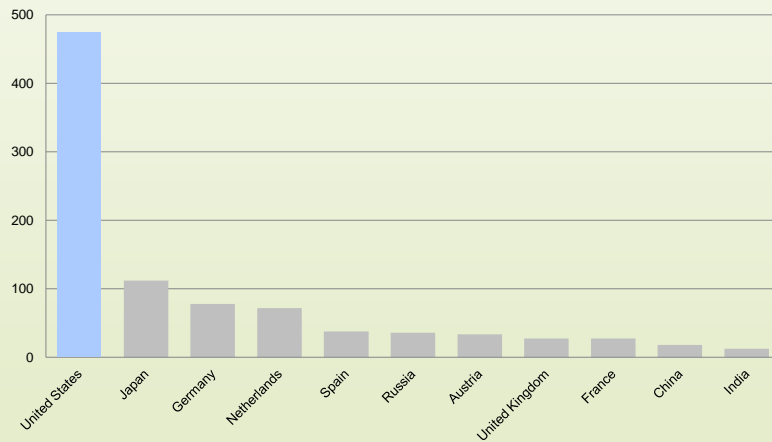


During the period indicated (he actually was able to develop the numbers for the period 1820 to 1994), the economy of the U.K. multiplied itself 27.6 times, France 27.3, Spain 38.3, Japan 111.8, India 12.7, Russia 36.1, and China 18.1.

Growth of GDP from 1820 to 1994

In 1990 international (Geary-Khamis purchasing power parity) dollars

Growth multiplier,
1820 to 1994



Source: Angus Madison, *Monitoring the World Economy*.
OECD: Paris, 1995.

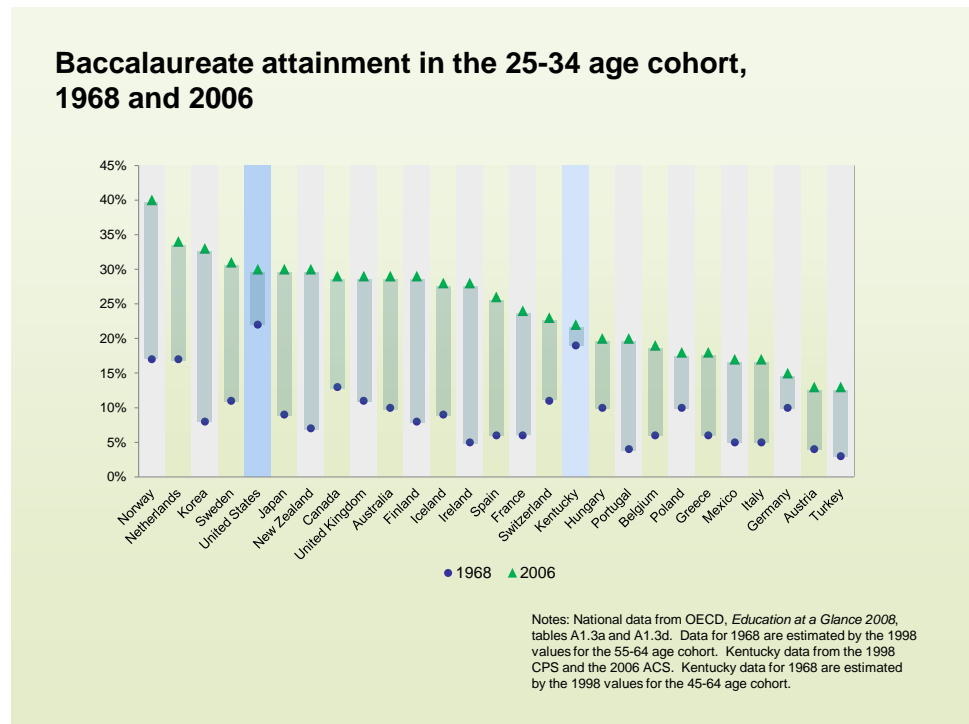
In this same period, the U.S. multiplied its GDP 474 times

Recent OECD data and studies confirm the value of the American experience. In fact, the 2004 OECD report states that, "...while financial capital investment is most strongly associated with growth at early stages of industrialization, the role of human capital increases with industrial development and overall level of educational attainment, and eventually becomes the strongest driver of economic growth."

The point of all this is that higher education has been intimately connected to the growth of the American economy, and that ties between it and private industry, support of entrepreneurship and scholarship, human capital formation and the commercialization of new knowledge must be at the center of any strategy to enhance America's future. This is not to say that this is all that we are about, but that our Universities and colleges cannot and should not ignore the role we can play to enhance the human condition and our nation's prosperity.

But as Marc Tucker's presentation demonstrates, the terms of engagement are changing. The gap I described earlier in terms of

bachelor's degree attainment has evaporated, and what was once America's secret has been discovered and emulated across the globe.

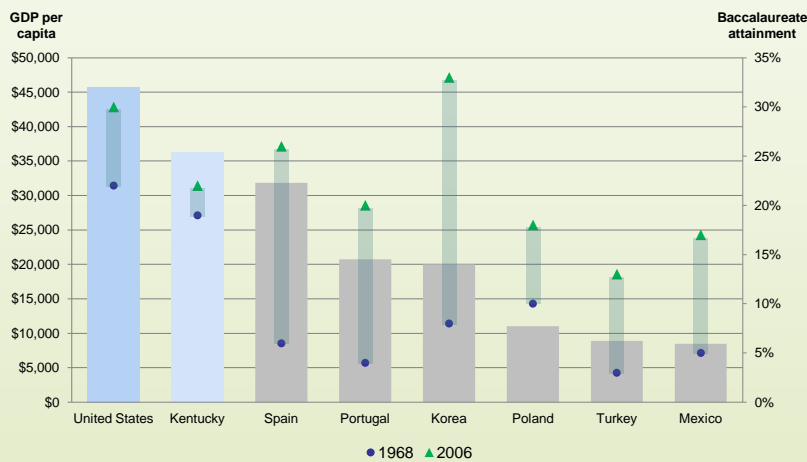


If Professor Ehrlich's conclusions are correct, the key to regaining America's preeminence will be an undiluted focus on getting more of our citizens into and through our colleges and universities. By "through," I mean "graduated from."

This focus does not necessarily mean huge infusions of more money, although having some predictability and financial stability would be helpful. But before I get into some positive suggestions regarding what we can do to help achieve that focus, I want to share one more slide with you. It was inspired by a comment I hear repeated almost weekly by policy makers and ordinary citizens, and as a new comer, is striking in its penetration into the thinking of Kentuckians: on any topic of significance the sentences all too frequently end with the words, "...but we are a poor State."

So I asked our staff to look at this educational attainment data, and to map improvement over time against per capita GDP.

Baccalaureate attainment in the 25-34 age cohort, 1968 and 2006, by GDP per capita, 2007



Notes: National baccalaureate attainment data from OECD, *Education at a Glance 2008*, tables A1.3a and A1.3d. Data for 1968 are estimated by the 1998 values for the 55-64 age cohort. Kentucky data from the 1998 CPS and the 2006 ACS. Kentucky baccalaureate attainment data for 1968 are estimated by the 1998 values for the 45-64 age cohort. National GDP data from World Bank, World Development Indicators database, 2008. Kentucky GDP data from US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2008.

As you can see, nations with significantly less wealth than Kentucky have advanced farther and faster than we. I don't point this out to be critical, but rather to emphasize that the focus these nations have given to getting their populations educated, whether in their own universities, or ours, has been expressed in terms of national budget priorities, and an unrelenting focus on the importance of education to the economic future of their countries.

Pointing out these challenges is easy. Describing actions to bring that "unrelenting focus" to Kentucky is a task that I welcome. The question is what can we do, as advocates, as professionals, and as teachers to help our Commonwealth and its children secure the education they will need to enjoy a quality of life we desire for all our citizens?

Start with this: accept the notion that every member of the faculty of our two and four year institutions can play an instrumental role in increasing the numbers of students from all walks of life who successfully matriculate through the system, and graduate with a degree in a timely manner.

- First, we must make sure that our system of postsecondary education is accessible to every citizen who has the desire and ability to succeed. This means assuring anyone with the motivation to seek postsecondary education can do so without regard to their personal income. From our first generation students, to our citizens of color, to our returning adults, each needs to have access to high quality, postsecondary education, whether it be a certification in welding, a bachelor's degree in business administration, a master's degree in social work, or post-doctoral studies in physics.
- We have to be continually innovative in the way we offer our programs and deliver our courses (this is for Al Lind to stay employed) to meet the changing needs of an increasingly diverse student population. We've got to do a better job providing outreach and support for high school guidance counselors, and their students, who need our support in transitioning into postsecondary education. And we need to provide more timely, informed and available advising for students seeking to transfer from KCTCS into any of the baccalaureate campuses in our state, and for adults seeking to complete a degree that may have been started years before, but interrupted by circumstance.
- We must commit ourselves to improving the quality and rigor of every course offering on every campus. Are we setting high expectations for our students, in their writing, their research, their capacity to demonstrate deep understanding of subject matter, or are we simply testing memorization of facts discussed in textbooks and lecture notes that have not been changed for years? Are we preparing our students for the new demands of a global economy? Are we approaching our courses as simple collections of subject matter content, or as tools to teach critical analysis and thinking, and developing the capacity to solve complex, multi dimensional, and multi disciplinary problems?

- We need to expand our connections with our P-12 colleagues and renew our commitment to quality teacher preparation, and to keeping K-12 teachers engaged as scholars throughout their careers. More than anyone in our State, you know that too many of our incoming freshmen are not ready for postsecondary work. Too many arrive on our campuses in need of remediation. Students, who in high school were receiving A's and B's, suddenly find themselves unable to perform college level work. Embarrassed, frustrated and confused, they often drop out. Slightly more than a quarter of the students who come to us earn a bachelor's degree in four years, and fewer than half earn a degree in six years.
- Fortunately, the legislature just passed Senate Bill 1. The bill specifically calls on us to work directly with our K-12 educators to align their standards to levels of knowledge and performance expected of college freshmen at our campuses. To fulfill this responsibility we will also participate in providing professional development to our current corps of teachers, preparing them to teach to these new standards. And, as Marc Tucker suggested earlier today, we need to ensure that teaching becomes attractive to our best, brightest, and most committed students and then recruit them into the teaching profession.

You will make the difference in our success in all these areas. This mission to ignite the “relentless focus” that will be central to our capacity to improve the lives of Kentucky’s people is highly dependent on each of us making this commitment. Achieving a highly educated population and a stronger system of postsecondary education will not be accomplished in the halls of the capitol in Frankfort or in the meetings rooms at CPE. It will not happen in the offices of your presidents, or the board rooms on your campuses. It will happen in your classrooms, and in the thousands of personal interactions you have with your students, and in the inspiration you provide through your guidance and teaching.

For all the marvelous things you have already done, we need to express our thanks and appreciation. But as you can see, we all need to do more to meet the emerging challenges of the 21st century. I'm thrilled to have all of you as our front line of committed scholars and teachers fulfilling the most important of roles in our nation.