

Economic Competitiveness/Workforce Workgroup Update 6/10/08

The workgroup was given the following charges:

- Examine other states/nations compared to Maryland to identify practices to promote competitiveness;
- Examine factors that make states an attractive location for businesses;
- Examine the knowledge and skills needed to create a trained workforce;
- Develop policies and/or principles to better link higher education to workforce/business needs; and
- Examine research and development and technology transfer practices at universities.

The workgroup held three meetings: an organizational meeting and two work sessions.

At the second meeting, the workgroup heard a presentation from Mr. Norman Augustine on his work as chair of the Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century, which produced the report “Rising Above the Gathering Storm.” Additionally, Dr. David Ramsay presented a report on the health workforce crisis and Dr. Carolane Williams presented findings from a national survey on state policies on community college workforce development. After the presentations, the workgroup held a discussion and decided to focus on three specific areas: 1) workforce, with an emphasis on P-20, including education and training and the needs of businesses; 2) innovation, with an emphasis on attracting researchers, technology transfer, and gaining venture capital; and 3) business/education linkages, with an emphasis on education and business coordination.

At the third meeting, information was reported to the workgroup regarding the three focus areas. For example, in the workforce area there was discussion about high school graduates being unprepared for college or the workforce and the need to focus on the remediation of these students so that the available pool of educated, trained and skilled workers is increased. Another example of discussion in the workforce area is that the State has identified high demand careers where there are critical shortages but at the same time there are many people who are unemployed who could be trained or educated to fill these positions. After this initial information gathering and discussion, the workgroup came up with several preliminary recommendations in the workforce area and a few examples are:

- Allocate funding to colleges that have programs that offer academic and career training to middle and high school students, especially in preparation for careers in critical shortage areas; and
- Provide enhancement funds on a line-item basis to help mitigate costs associated with high cost programs in critical needs areas (such as nursing).

Also at the third meeting, there was discussion in the innovation area about some of the positive aspects of Maryland such as its ranking first on a per capita basis on income and second per capita in bioscience concentration (it has 24 bioscience companies that have a market capitalization of approximately \$16 billion). Also, with the large federal installations and industrial giants in or near the Maryland area, Maryland should be a fertile environment for

innovation. After this initial information gathering and discussion, the workgroup came up with several preliminary recommendations in the innovation area and a few examples are:

- Expand existing programs in Maryland and emulate programs used in other states that foster innovation and technology development to help bring university research and development to the marketplace; and
- Examine the approach used by Ireland, a country approximating the State of Maryland in both population and income per capita, to produce a remarkable advance in competitiveness.

Finally, at the third meeting there was discussion in the business/education linkages area about the fact that partnerships are happening but many people are not aware of them. One preliminary recommendation in this area is to highlight the things that are already being done.

The workgroup will meet immediately following the Commission meeting to discuss the schedule and the plan for the workgroup for the summer.