“Coming Clean”
Rebuilding Public Trust
With Clear Outcomes,
Substantive Credentials,
and Meaningful Degrees.
Four Sectors
Four Perspectives
Four Questions
FOUR SECTORS

• Regional accreditation
• A leading higher education foundation
• A center for research and dissemination
• A college presidency
FOUR SECTORS

• Regional accreditation: WSCUC
• A leading higher education foundation: Lumina Foundation
• A center for research and dissemination: NILOA
• A college presidency: Kentucky State University
Four Perspectives

- Mary Ellen Petrisko, *President WSCUC*
- Debra Humphreys, *VP of Strategic Engagement, Lumina Foundation*
- Natasha Jankowski, *Director, NILOA*
- Aaron Thompson, *Interim President, Kentucky State University*
Four Questions

(1) From your perspective, why is the challenge of “building public trust” so important? Indeed, why has re-building become necessary?
Four Questions

(2) What is happening in your sector that is contributing or will contribute to building public trust “in the promise of liberal education and inclusive excellence”? To what extent is an expanded commitment to "Clear Outcomes, Substantive Credentials, and Meaningful Degrees” a part of the contribution you are making?
(3) What are the impediments your sector is facing—or is likely to face—with regard to this challenge?
Four Questions

(4) What else needs to happen in your sector—or elsewhere—if genuine progress is to occur?
Four Questions (In Brief)

• Why is the challenge of “building public trust” so important? **Why is re-building necessary?**

• **What is happening in your sector** that is contributing or will contribute to building public trust “in the promise of liberal education and inclusive excellence”?

• **What are the impediments** your sector is facing?

• **What else needs to happen** if genuine progress is to occur?
Mary Ellen Petrisko
President WSCUC
Evidence that rebuilding trust is necessary

[Clip from Wall Street Journal illustrating how issues of accreditation are now very much in the news.]

[Cartoon showing airline passenger with no experience as a pilot winning the support of other passengers to fly the plane because “the pilots have lost touch with regular passengers.”]
What is happening in our sector?

“Whether it be labeled liberal learning or essential learning or general education, there is, and must be, a core of any college or university program that will enable students to think critically, communicate effectively, integrate and apply their learning, and continue to learn as needed in relation to work, life, and civic participation... This is what we believe should be understood as the most important ‘student outcomes.’”

— Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions
What challenges does our sector face?

[Cartoon shows a scientist trying unsuccessfully to explain a breakthrough to reporters. He responds to their questions with a complicated mathematical formula.]
What needs to happen in our sector?

[Cartoon shows executive responding to a simplistic graph with a request for more data.]

[Poster says “I ❤️ RIGOR”]
Debra Humphreys
VP of Strategic Engagement
Lumina Foundation
Imperative of Rebuilding Public Trust

• Only 80,000 of the nearly **12 million net new jobs** created since 2011 were jobs available to those with a high school diploma or less (Carnevale 2016).

• Postsecondary credential holders are more likely to be **employed, healthier, civically engaged**, score higher on **well-being** measures of all sorts.
Imperative of Rebuilding Public Trust

BUT

• Only 24% of Americans believe attaining higher ed credentials are “affordable for all” (Gallup/Lumina 2016).

• Only 32% agree that employers actually value the knowledge and skills a degree represents; Only 36% of whites strongly agree that a postsecondary credential leads to a better life (Gallup/Lumina 2016).
AND, REMEMBER

• Confidence in all institutions has been declining for years. The overall average of Americans expressing "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in 14 institutions is below 33% for the third straight year (Gallup 2016).
Lumina’s Five Priorities for Action—All Prioritize Equity/Quality

- Redesign the postsecondary learning system
- Make quality learning transparent and connect credentials
- Expand competency-based learning
- Develop clear pathways to initial credentials
- Develop effective systems for assuring and improving the quality of credentials—so that all who attain credentials are well prepared to succeed in the workplace and participate actively as citizens and community members.
Impediments—
Data, Coordination, Communication

[Clip art contrasts jumble of competing arrows flying in all directions with clear oval containing arrows all pointing in the same direction.]
Impediments—Data, Coordination, Communication

Gaps in Postsecondary Data/Lack of Transparency/Clarity about Quality Across Sectors

- Disaggregated data on retention, attainment, or quality of learning outcomes

Lack of Coordination and Connection

- Ineffective Transfer systems; Chaotic patterns of attendance; Wide disparity of quality outcomes

The Public Still Does Not Fully Understand The Problems and How We are Addressing Them

- Public skepticism about value of postsecondary credentials; What “college” means to most people
Maintaining Connections Between Equity and Quality; Keeping Learning in The Quality Assurance Policy Conversation

**Quality/Equity Connections**

All credentials, including initial credentials must position individuals for success in employment *and* further education. It is “essential to assure that certificates and certifications [and all degrees and credentials] expand opportunity and do not become a lower-quality default credential only for members of traditionally underserved groups.”
Maintaining Connections Between Equity and Quality; Keeping Learning in The Quality Assurance Policy Conversation

The Policy Conversations

• --while likely focused on metrics about attainment and workforce development—ask questions about all policies and accountability frameworks:

• Are policies advancing attainment goals while **also** closing equity gaps and improving learning outcomes?

The Federal Conversations

• --preserving positive focus on learning outcomes assessment in context of new risk-based approaches; and in climate of deregulation
Aaron Thompson
Interim President
Kentucky State University
Who is in charge of building public trust?
Why public trust is hard to build

- Costs are increasing faster than graduation and retention rates
- Gaps are not closing fast enough
- Educators are not buying into a business model
- Debate: public good or private good?
Jobs in the field are hard to find

• Liberal arts education is taking a beating on its value in high need and high paid employment
• However, all employers want employees to have necessary skills provided by a liberal arts education
It is sold as either/or/neither

- Combining necessary soft skills with technical skills is hard to sell inside and outside institutions of higher education
- State support is decreasing as a whole for public universities. Private institutions can be afforded only by an elite few.
- Performance funding and increased oversight of governmental entities
- It’s a lot about quantity and a little about quality
So, where do we go from here?

- Build quality into a quantifiable strategic agenda
- Engage employers early and often
- Educate internal and external constituents on the value of education
- Produce an educated graduate
Natasha Jankowski

Director

National Institute

For Learning Outcomes Assessment
Evidence Rebuilding Trust is Necessary
Have you heard (from inside or outside higher education)?

- Arguments for a misguided focus on outcomes
- Learning gains are minimal
- Is it worth the cost?
- What does it mean to even have a degree anymore?
- Outcomes assessment is hurting higher education!
- Assessment is a waste of time
- Anyone can game a system that doesn’t care about student learning
What is happening in our sector that could contribute to building public trust in the promise of liberal education?
What challenges does our sector face?

[Cartoon shows a scientist presenting a lengthy equation that concludes, “then a miracle occurs.” His colleagues advises him to be more specific.]
What needs to happen in in our sector?

[Cartoon shows Venn diagram. The left circle represents “What you want to say.” The right circle represents “What they’re interested in.” The intersection of the two is “relevance.”]
Now . . .

- Questions you have for our panelists
- Four questions for you
Questions for the panel?
Four Questions for YOU

• From your perspective, should there be a priority on “building public trust”? Or is the question a distraction from more important issues?

• If you regard “building public trust” as a priority, what have you observed that might contribute to or is contributing to building public trust “in the promise of liberal education and inclusive excellence”?

• What impediments do you acknowledge?

• What needs to happen if genuine progress is to occur?
THANK YOU!