

**WV Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Counselors**  
**President Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.**  
**Oct. 18, 2012**



Thank you, Ms. Hunter and members of the conference planning committee. I am excited to be speaking with you tonight, as your theme “Investing in West Virginia’s Future in Higher Education” resonates soundly with me as the new president at West Virginia State University.

I believe strongly that investing in our students’ success is everyone’s job—and that our students are what will make or break the future of higher education in West Virginia.

We must envision our students’ successfully enrolling and graduating, and we must help them envision that success as well. From their first days on campus, whether it’s at State, Davis and Elkins, WVU, or KVCTC we must instill in them a vision of themselves walking across the stage at graduation to accept their degrees.

Visions can be elusive if they are not founded in the people and integrated in the processes of an organization. They can be as limited as a repeated mantra or they can become a part of who our students truly are and inspire them to overcome challenges, to achieve great feats.

The vision must start with us as administrators. It must start with each of you in this room, but it will live and thrive through the successes of our students, and in the economic and civic impact they make on this state. I believe that many of you are sitting in this room today because you want to be a part of that vision and a part of building a strong future for higher education in West Virginia.

I believe there are 3 priorities key to the success of our students across the state, and subsequently the success of institutions of higher education in West Virginia:

- excellence
- student-centered service, and
- accountability

First, each of us must be excellent in everything we do for students and for the universities at which we serve. Not perfect, mind you, but definitely excellent. If you’re not going to your office every day planning to do excellent work, not just work, you are robbing yourself and your students of your talents—and they know it! Students know if we are putting in a half-hearted effort. They deserve your excellence—it promotes the development of their vision as a successful college student and ultimately as a college graduate!

In some cases, your efforts to help a student become enrolled and register for classes at the university will open up a door to a young man or woman for whom a college education was not much more than a dream. They may be the first in their family to even attempt a university degree. West Virginia's history is steeped in providing academic opportunities and access for deserving students. In West Virginia, we are proud to welcome individuals to study, evolve, and succeed in our colleges and universities. Those students deserve your excellence.

Our commitment to student-centered service makes a big impact on our students' retention and degree completion. Too few of our students are completing their degrees within six years of enrolling in colleges and universities across West Virginia. We lag behind the majority of the country in degree completion! That's just not acceptable to me and I don't think it is to you either.

We are talking about our students' future success . . . the personal, financial, and social opportunities of these men and women. We must be student-centered by intentionally inserting ourselves into the paths of these students before they leave our universities.

A 5- to 10-minute investment in student-centered service may make a difference in a student persisting at, or leaving your institution. Every one of us must be willing to invest time in our students' success.

Student retention is within our grasp and every one of us can smile and greet students as we cross campus, we can take a few minutes to walk a student to an office they need to find, we can connect them with an academic advisor, or with a student organization to help them get engaged with their peers.

Each of you works really hard to get our students admitted and registered in classes; let's take the time to provide them the student-centered support and service that will keep them on track to graduation.

Finally, we must be truly accountable to our students, our colleges and the parents and the taxpayers who trust us to manage the resources required for a sustainable institution of higher education. Are you accountable for meeting with students to explain their Financial Aid package...for the third time? Coming back from lunch five minutes early to ensure the cashier's window has coverage? Sending out admission letters a day or two earlier than promised, or taking an extra 10 minutes to map out a student's degree program after he or she has changed majors *again*?

As college and university administrators we are entrusted with tasks and responsibilities that can encourage students to stay, or if we are careless, can drive them away from completing their college education. We are accountable for the way we make our students feel when they interact with us. A bit of kindness or encouragement even when we have to say "no" can result in a positive student interaction and outcome.

I've challenged my colleagues at West Virginia State University, to commit themselves to excellence, student-centeredness and accountability —and I am confident that the investments we make through these foundational and intentional acts will greatly impact the future of higher education in the state of West Virginia, and beyond. I encourage each of you to make that same commitment on your campus! I say to you, as members of the WV Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Counselors . . . you will help shape and define the future of higher education in West Virginia!

Thank you.