

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Regents  
**From:** Board Office  
**Subject:** Initial Report from the Public Policy Task Force  
**Date:** August 20, 2004

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**Recommended Action:** Receive report, and endorse recommended approach to modify Board policy, procedures, and staffing relative to state government relations and public affairs.

**Executive Summary:** The Task Force held numerous meetings throughout the summer and sought input from a wide variety of public officials, institutional personnel, and other stakeholders. As a result, several areas of strength in the Regents current personnel and processes were identified, as were several challenges.

The Task Force unanimously agreed that the current structure and policies for public affairs—encompassing state government relations, outreach, communications, public policy planning—is not as effective, efficient, or successful as desired. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the Board revise staffing structure, policy manual, table of organization, and budget in order to enhance and improve government relations and public policy activities.

In summary, the Task Force recommends the creation of a Director of Public Affairs and Deputy Executive Director position. This position would report to the President of the Board and the Executive Director and would also have line authority as supervisor of the legislative liaison staff. Additionally, the Task Force recommends the specific job descriptions, changes in policies, and table of organization to carry out these goals, as detailed in agenda items 2a, 2b, 2c and 2e. Budgetary reallocations, from institutions to the Board Office, will be necessary to carry out these goals as detailed in agenda item 2f. The individual recommended to fill this new role is Mr. Gary Steinke, as reported in agenda item 2d.

**Background:**

In May 2004, the Board approved appointment of a public policy task force consisting of Regents Forsyth, Downer and Neil and the Executive Director. The Task Force was charged with examination of the Board's structure, policy, and procedures, as well as the role of Board members, staff, and institutional officials in government relations, public outreach, and related matters. The Task Force was also asked to consider initiatives for the Board to pursue with state and federal officials in the coming year. The Task Force was to complete its' work and make recommendations to the Board no later than September 2004.

This set of recommendations is the first that will be issued by the Task Force. At the September Board meeting, an additional report from the Task Force will include recommendations for public policy priorities in the coming year consistent with the second charge set out by the Board in May 2004.

**Analysis:**

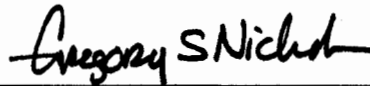
Initial task force discussions led to a conclusion that an overall review of the Board policies, procedures, and structures was in order, beyond the scope of public policy. The members agreed that in some areas of Board operations, a greater delegation of authority to institutions might be in order, whereas in others, a greater centralization made sense. In consideration of the Board strategic priorities, particularly the goal of public accountability, the area of public affairs and government relations was one where a greater degree of centralized authority appeared to make the most sense to the Task Force.

The Task Force later determined that, consistent with the Board strategic goal of public accountability, specific changes in past practices were indeed necessary relating to public affairs and government relations to provide more clear and central responsibility and accountability. One specific goal sought in the new system is increased clarity, consistency, and coordination in formulation and dissemination of Board public policy priorities. An additional goal was to have more direct involvement of the Board members in public policy matters and to have the necessary staff support for both goals. The Task Force concluded that because of the lack of a single person accountable for such activities for the enterprise and the fragmentation of authority over the state relations staff, a series of system changes was in order.

The Task Force recommendations will leave in place existing, institutional driven federal relations activities, with periodic reporting to the Board through the Board President. Relative to state relations, however, the changes recommended will change the primary point of responsibility to the Board and Board office, through the activities of the new Board Director of Public Affairs. The Regent legislative lobbyists will now be supervised by the Director of Public Affairs, in consultation with the university presidents, rather than the previous arrangement where they were supervised in a line relationship by the President of the individual university they served.

As a result of these changes, there will be modifications made in various policies and procedures and a transfer of both budgetary resources and expenditures for these personnel from the institutions to the Board budget. After a transition period, the net cost to the Regent enterprise is nil, as the resources are simply transferred and expended through a different part of the enterprise. There is no increase being sought in state funds for these purposes.

These structural, personnel, and policy changes are being brought forth in advance of the rest of the Task Force recommendations. This is being done to begin to immediately implement, with Board approval, necessary planning to carry forth Board public policy priorities for the coming year once they are adopted.



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Gregory S. Nichols

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