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Thank you, Paul, for that very kind introduction. Paul and I have struggled through a lot together!

And wasn't that nice of Molly Broad to send such a supportive letter. Her Vice President, Terry Hartle, has been a major contributor to our work.

My special thanks go to our host, the Lumina Foundation and to Jamie Merisotis for his leadership and vision on this important set of issues. . . and our Symposium organizers, the Presidents' the Council of State Governments. What a strong program they have put together for all of us.

I am pleased to be here with all of you this evening to share with you some perspectives from the work of the Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education (isn't that a mouthful!) and to start thinking about and planning for the next steps building on that framework which we all anticipate will lead to a State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement that can serve as the platform for significant work that will enhance student access and assure quality while reducing many of the significant costs and burdens associated with the regulation of distance education. It's not often that we get folks from 47 states and beyond in one place – and your presence here is a strong reflection of the importance of this issue for higher education and for our country.

I have been proud to serve as Chair of the Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education. As you know, just last week the Commission completed its work and released its report.

It's been referred to by several names but its formal title is *Advancing Access through Regulatory Reform: Findings, Principles, and Recommendations for the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement*. Our generous hosts have provided copies of this Report for all of you.

For those who may not know much about the Commission, let me give a little history.

As we all know, the U.S. Department of Education's 2011 Program Integrity rules cast a spotlight on the problem of inconsistent state regulations associated with the delivery of distance education across state lines, affirming the reality that many of you live on a daily basis... that education providers must comply with multiple, often inconsistent, state laws and regulations. In light of this reality, institutions across the country have struggled to determine how to continue to enhance access while delivering distance education to students in multiple states, and while meeting their obligations under the law.

At the same time the Presidents' Forum, the Council of State Governments, WICHE, SHEEO and others had begun working to outline and pursue strategies to help states and institutions of higher education navigate this space more efficiently and effectively.

Subsequently, the leaders of SHEEO and A*P*L*U – my good friends, Paul Lingenfelter and Peter McPherson – approached my colleagues at EducationCounsel me about putting together a broader coalition of higher education stakeholders to work toward a principled and pragmatic consensus on the challenging issues involved, and to build upon the work of the Council of State Governments and WICHE, in particular. After much deliberation and evaluation of the relevant set of issues, I agreed to chair the Commission.

So, in May of 2012, the Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education was formed. Its stated purpose was to develop recommendations to would enhance student access and assure quality while addressing the costs and inefficiencies faced by postsecondary institutions that seek to provide educational opportunities to students in more than one state. Our tasks were straightforward:

1. to bring uniformity to state regulation of distance education;
2. to reduce the burden on institutions providing educational opportunities in multiple states; and,
3. to ensure quality and protect the interests of student consumers.

The broad-based coalition of Commissioners, assisted by my EducationCounsel colleagues, have done a stellar job of building upon the work of others to establish a clear framework or blueprint that should guide the next phases of the work ahead, which I know you'll be discussing in more detail tomorrow. Let me emphasize this...The Commission has not completed the necessary work that lies ahead; rather, it has provided a clear, cogent, practical blueprint upon which much more work remains to be done. We are, in short, moving from key concepts that underlie a framework to issues of implementation—which will ultimately lead to a State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement..

I also want to emphasize the hard work of this Commission in working to identify and affirm key points of consensus out of the different views and positions on the complex issues that confronted us all. Indeed, when we first met, a key part of our work was simply getting to know each other and understanding the worldviews of each other—to inform our deliberations.

In just ten months, the Commission has succeeded in articulating a this framework for new system of regulation for distance education. Contributing to this remarkable achievement has been the considerable work of the Presidents' Forum . . . , the Council of State Governments . . . , and WICHE. In addition, we have received help and input from so many other colleagues throughout higher education and state government from all across the country. This was by design: We knew at the outset that this effort would not be successful if we did not ensure the airing of perspectives from all affected actors. To say that our discussions have been robust and wide ranging would be quite an understatement!

So I want to thank all of the Commissioners for their dedication and their willingness to consider our broader goals in light of particular personal and institutional interests , in order to focus on the real beneficiaries of our work – the students.

The Commissioners and their affiliations are listed in the report, and I want to recognize those who are here with us. Please stand when I call your name.

Jim Geringer
Marshall Hill
Arthur Kirk
Paul Lingenfelter
Sylvia Manning
Peter McPherson
Tad Perry
Pamela Quinn
George Ross
Paul Shiffman
Ron Taylor

Let's give them all a round of applause.

I also want to recognize my team at EducationCounsel for their role in framing the issues, facilitating outreach and each of our meetings, undertaking research on key issues, and drafting the Report itself. Many of our team are back in Washington, as are the teams at APLU and SHEEO that contributed so much, but Art Coleman and Terri Taylor are with us, and I ask them to stand and be recognized.

So, let me close by briefly sharing my perspectives on the Commission report and the trajectory moving forward—where all of you will focus your work tomorrow and in the weeks ahead:

The Commission framework is first and foremost, pragmatic. It builds on the existing higher education triad of the federal government, accrediting agencies, and state governments—acknowledging the important roles of each in this equation. Moreover, it envisions a system of interstate reciprocity to be created from the *existing* system of regional compacts, which that will allow institutions, states, and regional compacts to work together to more efficiently provide distance education opportunities to students across the nation.

The report addresses five main issues:

1. The concept of interstate reciprocity and the necessary conditions for success, including a common definition of physical presence;
2. The wisdom of establishing a national framework that taps the experience of regional compacts to support ongoing governance; regional approach for governance,
3. The essential need of ensuring institutional quality, and the appropriate reliance on our accreditors in this regard;
4. The corresponding need to maintain clear foundations for ensuring consumer protection, a traditional province of the states; and
5. The importance of maintaining key foundations for ensuring institutional financial responsibility.

The findings, principles, and recommendations in the Report recognize the unique facets of distance education. But they also suggest elements of coherence and consistency across state laws that can support the growth of this sector of higher education in a responsible and efficient way.

The importance of this work cannot be overstated. We currently have in this country nearly *seven-million* students using online technology to access postsecondary education. Those students will

benefit immensely from the consumer protection and quality assurances built into the Commission's proposed system of interstate reciprocity.

Further, this system will increase opportunity and access for students across the country, bringing us closer to President Obama's goal of leading the world in college completion rates by 2020.

The recommendations contained in the report are an excellent example of the success we can achieve when we put the needs of students first. Beyond its immediate impact on higher education, I believe that the Commission's work also is a model for the rest of the country in developing solutions for the many difficult issues that confront us.

Thank you again to everyone who has made the trip to Indianapolis for this important event.