



Ivory towers get WIRED for innovation—and access to \$195 million

Among the plans for education articulated by President Bush in his 2006 State of the Union address were some pretty familiar themes: improving the quality of math and science education; supporting universities that provide world-class education and research opportunities; job training to improve worker skills.

A year later it is not business as usual. Higher education will be well served by paying attention to some new thinking.

For example, American Competitiveness Initiative funds—\$5.9 billion in FY 2007, and more than \$136 billion over 10 years—includes a proposal to transform a \$14 billion patchwork of uncoordinated and bureaucratic job training efforts into an education assistance effort modeled after Pell Grants and called Career Advancement Accounts.

These are widely available self-managed accounts of up to \$3,000 that workers and people looking for work can use to obtain training and other employment services.

A second departure from the norm

“WIRED” is an acronym you’ll be hearing more often. It stands for Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic

Development. WIRED includes a fresh emphasis on innovation to transform the economy and the education system that supports it. WIRED is based on an expectation that K-12, community colleges and universities will work with each other, and with private enterprise—regionally.

Instead of allocating and dispensing entitlement money, WIRED involves a competition for \$195 million of round one funding. Furthermore, it is the Department of Labor, not Education, doing the “wiring.”

Though the overall Competitiveness Initiative strives for national results, it is actually regional solutions which must be developed to meet the challenge of global competition. According to Emily DeRocco, Assistant Secretary of Labor, “It is in regional economies where companies, workers, researchers, entrepreneurs and governments come together to create competitive advantage and where new ideas and new knowledge are transformed into advanced, high-quality products or services. In other words, it is in regions where innovation occurs.”

WIRED includes an expectation of innovation the workplace. But its movers and shakers very much expect innovation to result in postsecondary education as well. Early expectations include 21st century apprenticeships; innovative training careers in health-care, biotech and information technology; technology-based learning; curriculum chunking; instructional accommodations for adult learners; and other methods of talent development.

Hundreds of existing and new entities competed for first-round funding in their states. Each governor was allowed to submit up to three finalists. After a two-step screening process just 13 WIRED applications of the 97 submitted were approved by the Department of Labor’s senior staff in the Employment and Training Administration.

Each region will receive \$15 million over three years. Each must demonstrate success before the next wave of funding. The success criteria will include job placement and job reten-

tion data, as well as innovative issues like patents and entrepreneurial curricula.

New opportunities for campuses

Community colleges are all over this new initiative. Twenty of them have already created a network to develop a curriculum based on innovation—not welding or car repair - innovation! What are universities doing?

Ms. DeRocco recalls conducting a forum with company representatives from the biotech industry a year or so ago. She also invited people from K-12 and college campuses to discuss skills

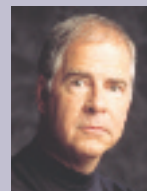
“WIRED includes an expectation of innovation the workplace. But its movers and shakers very much expect innovation to result in postsecondary education as well.”

and competencies. “The university representatives had no idea why they were in that room with the Department of Labor. There was a complete disconnect. Fast forward to this year and the WIRED Initiative . . . even the land grant colleges came to us.”

Four-year colleges and universities have four important roles in the WIRED competitiveness vision. By embracing them, a campus will be in a position to get a fair share of this new generation of federally funded education initiatives.

1. Be the driver of an economic engine. For example, in Indiana Purdue has the lead.

Continued on page 74



TOM ROBINSON is an editor of *The Greentree Gazette* and a marketing consultant with higher education clients. He can be reached at trobinson@greentreegazette.com

It would be a mistake to miss...

mistake



of the
week

featuring:

- Ron Allan
- Jim Castagnera
- Herschell Gordon Lewis
- John Pearson

and more...


GreentreeGazette.com
eNews
Business Intelligence for Higher Education

Castagnera, Continued from page 48

blocked and unblocked Iranian assets during the 1980-81 U.S. embassy hostage crisis, Judge O'Toole rules that "if the plaintiffs are able to establish that the antiquities are indeed the property of Iran, those assets will be subject to attachment and execution pursuant to [the] TRIA."

Who owns the antiquities in the targets' possession?

Denying the defendant museums' motions, Judge O'Toole adds, "The defendants [also] say the summonses should be quashed [because] the property in question does not belong to Iran. This is a disputed question of fact that remains to be resolved." He ordered the parties to reappear before him on October 31st.

Instead, the defendants responded asking him to reconsider his decision or send the issue up to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. At press time, that request was still unanswered.

If Judge O'Toole's rulings are not reversed, the plaintiffs' case can proceed, likely to a long and costly round of discovery activities through which

Jenny Rubin's attorneys and experts will seek to ascertain ownership of the properties at issue. Plaintiffs would likely proceed against all the other targeted universities and museums.

In the 1981 *Raiders* film, Indiana Jones and his comrades go off after the Ark of the Covenant. The golden icon raided from its tomb by Indy at the film's beginning, then taken from him by a rival, never reappears in the movie. Its fate is forgotten amid the action and adventure. Who might own it? Who might be able to prove ownership?

Before all the dust settles in *Rubin v. Islamic Republic of Iran*, the fate of the artifacts at issue may depend upon the Second Circuit, perhaps even the U.S. Supreme Court. If the courts conclude that Rubin and her fellow raiders are entitled to proceed against the targeted institutions, several museums must then prove that the likes of Harvard alumnus Grenville L. Winthrop, Class of 1886, obtained the artifacts by means demonstrably more legitimate than those practiced by the intrepid, but shady, Professor Jones. ■

Robinson, Continued from page 50

2. Get research and development out of the lab and into the marketplace.
3. Develop innovative programs of study that are linked directly to business competency models.
4. Become an active part of the "pre-K through grey" continuum of learning with specific practices that enable adult learners to return for the education they need.

Kind of makes one suspect that "terminal degree" will become an oxymoron.

Life after W

It's the Bush administration that is driving this entrepreneurial approach. Will a new Congress in 2007 or the election in 2008 be its death knell?

There is already a plan to fund future generations. Thirteen additional "virtual regions" have been

identified and are receiving \$100,000 grants each as seed money. New, albeit smaller, programs are also being developed by DOL. Meanwhile, at least some of the programs are expected to become self-sustaining, with curtailed dependence on the federal money.

Other organizations are on the case. The Council on Competitiveness has "Innovate America," which brings together business, academic and government people on competitiveness issues. The National Academy of Sciences is involved as well, having published a report entitled "Rising Above the Gathering Storm."

Assistant DOL Secretary DeRocco believes that WIRED is a bipartisan effort that transcends political limitations.

The next funding gateway is January 2007. Who will make the grade? ■