

**Herbert R. Tillery**  
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**Talking Points**

**D.C. State Board of Education Roundtable to Address Teacher Quality and  
Preparation for Postsecondary Education and the Workforce**  
**January 16, 2008 --- 5:30 pm ---- Old Council Chambers**  
**441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW**

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State Superintendent Gist, Board President Bobb and other members of the State Board of Education, thank you for inviting me to participate in this evening's roundtable on educator quality and the skills our young people need to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market.

I am Herbert R. Tillery, Executive Director of the DC College Success Foundation. In recognition of the focus of this **panel on preparation for postsecondary education and the workforce**, my remarks will address the "**How**" to mobilize the community to support the building of the skills needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century market. I will do that through describing the **Double the Numbers Initiative, its goals, its key accomplishments, and its role** in furthering efforts to ensure DC students graduate from college, prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I have provided a folder which contains a copy of my **testimony**; a one page description of the work of the **DC College Success Foundation**; and, a copy of the **Double the Numbers Call to Action** that I will refer to during my remarks.

The **Double the Numbers initiative** is a community wide action-oriented coalition that arose from research and a compelling report which illuminated the challenges in DC.

**WHY MUST WE WORK TOGETHER FOR CHANGE?**

I'll answer that by highlighting a few facts found in the Bridgespan study.

- 67% of new jobs in the DC area require some postsecondary education;
- 46% of DC residents have a bachelor's degree or higher;
- 36% of DC residents read at 4<sup>th</sup> grade level or lower;
- 43% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders in this study graduated from high school on time, while the US average is 68%;
- **9% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders** in this study obtained a postsecondary degree within 5 years of enrolling in college, while the US average is 23%.
- This number drops to **3% in Wards 7 & 8**, where the DC College Foundation is focusing its **Achievers Scholars program**.

**Bottomline: Most skilled and professional jobs are filled by non-residents of DC. An improved educational opportunity is the only way to break the cycle of poverty.**

We must act together, and we are. **The Double the Numbers Coalition** includes representatives from the District of Columbia Public & Public Charter Schools, the Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the DC College Success Foundation, the DC College Access Program (otherwise known as DC CAP), over 70 College Access Providers, to include Mentors Inc and Jobs for America's Graduates, colleges and universities, education agencies, foundations, community groups and area businesses. Together, we represent an unprecedented commitment by government and community leaders who work together on a **clear goal: To double the number of 9<sup>th</sup> graders who finish high school, enroll in college, and graduate from college within five years by 2016; and then work to triple these numbers.**

### **HOW DOES THE COALITION WORK?**

We have united around a **five-part action agenda**, which includes:

#### **Creating a college-going culture---**

**through raising awareness** about the importance of college, the available options, and how far DC must go to provide meaningful opportunities to many more young people. This will require changing the current perception that kids can't and won't learn, and mobilizing resources around specific plans for initiating and sustaining change.

Major accomplishments to date to include --

Launching a web site, [www.doublethenumbersdc.org](http://www.doublethenumbersdc.org);

Coordinating the effort to organize the Mayor's First College Awareness Week activities during the week of September 23-29, 2007;

And conducting surveys and focus groups with high school students to help shape an upcoming youth-focused college-going campaign.

#### **Increasing the number of college-ready high school graduates by --**

providing assistance with the **implementation of DCPS' secondary school transformation strategy**, with a focus on college readiness.

Major accomplishments to date include:

Beginning the initial stage of implementing the DCPS secondary school transformation plan;

And supporting **Individualized Graduation Plans** for all high school students.

#### **Improving postsecondary transitions --**

We have many organizations in the District, often called **college access organizations**. There are over 70. We bring these organizations together monthly through the **College Access Provider Roundtable** to work student by student, school by school to support efforts to ensure every student graduates from high school ready for college. These groups work with school administrators, counselors, and other partners in their efforts.

One of our core strategies is to **create College Access Collaboratives** in high schools. We have five now and will be growing more in the coming year. For example, at HD Woodson High School, we have 15 organizations working as a collaborative with the principal, counselors, and a partnerships coordinator to reach every student with strong supports for their path to college.

Another key strategy is to **scale up effective college access programs**, especially those that focus on mentoring, tutoring, remediation, and improving student/college connections. To support this strategy, we have conducted and continue to update an extensive **gap analysis** to determine how many organizations are out there; the number of students they serve; the type of services provided; and, the intensity of the services. The impact has been the reduction of the duplication of services; the integration of complimentary services; the provision of an entry point for partners to work with schools and to be connected with the appropriate staff at the school; and to ensure greater coordination, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

#### **Increasing college persistence --**

We want students to succeed in college, which **means completing college**. This means encouraging students to attend colleges and universities where they will be well supported. We are working to identify institutions that have strong track records of college completion.

Key accomplishments to date:

Working with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and the DC College Access Program (DC CAP) to help students better understand their choices.

And working with various universities to determine their willingness to **put in place support systems that will ensure student success.**

#### **Creating an environment for reform --**

Another key piece of our reform effort – which is also central to many other efforts – is **the creation of PK-16 data warehouse**. As you know, OSSE has received a \$5.7 million grant from the US Department of Education to support the development of a PK-16 data warehouse, which will allow much better monitoring of student performance from preschool through college.

Our **2008 Workplan** will focus on the following strategic priorities:

- **Creating a College-Going Culture** across the entire community;
- **Continuing and expanding the College Access Provider Roundtable**, with an emphasis on building more and more effective school based collaboratives;
- Ensuring advisors **lead students toward colleges with good persistence outcomes**;
- **Strengthening UDC's role** in College Success;
- **Align DCPS Secondary school transformation and DTN strategies.**

The process described above **is being viewed as a model for establishing community collaboration.** It is currently being assessed by the Bridgespan Group and is being replicated around the country, to include Atlanta, GA, and Washington State.

### **HOW DOES THE WORK OF THE DTN COALITION SUPPORT 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS?**

A focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills **serves as the backbone** for many of the members of our Coalition. Through many of our college access providers like Gear-up and Georgetown University, some of our students have the opportunity of **studying abroad**, thus increasing their global awareness and multi-cultural literacy skills.

We encourage the **use of media and other forms of visual literacy.** In September 2007, we launched our first College Awareness Week. The event was kicked off with a student-created video chronicling a day of college life for a recent alumni. We envision more of these types of efforts in the future.

Much of our work at the school level, through the collaboratives, focuses on the so-called “soft skills” of a 21<sup>st</sup> century education – **providing students with the supports, relationships and know-how to navigate** their way through high school and into college.

But frankly, we do not see enough of a focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the educational landscape. As you know, your predecessor entity, the Board of Education, was one of the signers of the Memorandum of Understanding that organized the Coalition. We believe **the State Board continues to have a role in this work.**

### **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION?**

The State Board of Education can play an important role in doubling the numbers and increasing the focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Possible areas of action include:

**Establish a definition of college readiness** that includes a focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Other State Boards have done this and used it to hold schools accountable.

**Foster intentional partnerships** with college access providers operating in schools. High schools alone can not address all of the supports students need to be college ready. The State Board should ask that all public schools, in their school improvement plans, to show how they are partnering with college access providers, businesses, and other organizations to improve the college readiness of their students.

**Strengthen the focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills at UDC.** More DC public high school students go to UDC than any other college or university. By helping UDC focus on this skill set, we will help many, many students.

I thank you for this opportunity to discuss the work of the Double the Numbers Coalition and its key accomplishments to date. **We are extremely excited about the future of our partnership with DC public and public charter schools — and with this State Board of Education.**