



# Alabama Commission on Higher Education

## Advancing Alabama's Future Through Higher Education

# 13th Quadrennial Evaluation

## September 2026

www.ACHE.edu




# Alabama Commission on Higher Education

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# Table of Contents

Preface ..... 4

Executive Summary ..... 5

Survey Overview and Findings ..... 8

Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 17

Appendix A: Statistical Survey Results ..... 18

Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations from Past Quadrennial Reviews ..... 25

ACHE Recommendations, 2026 ..... 25

ACHE Recommendations, 2022 ..... 26

ACHE Recommendations, 2018 ..... 26

ACHE Recommendations, 2014 ..... 27

ACHE Recommendations, 2010 ..... 28

## Preface

By statute, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) evaluates its strategic planning goals and service to the state every four years during the last year of each gubernatorial term. ACHE staff members conducted the review for the thirteenth quadrennial evaluation during August 2026.

ACHE's evaluation method for this review consisted of an online survey sent to over 550 public four-year and two-year college or university officials, private college or university officials, members of campus or system board of trustees, K-12 officials, members of the state legislature, executive branch officials, civic and business leaders, and members of the news media or press. The following report presents ACHE's analysis of the survey responses.

We wish to thank those individuals who participated in the survey for this thirteenth quadrennial evaluation of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education.



Dr. Jim Purcell
Executive Director

# Alabama Commission on Higher Education
# 13th Quadrennial Evaluation: 2026

## Executive Summary

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) conducts a quadrennial evaluation every four years in accordance with Section 16-5-12, Code of Alabama 1975, which provides:

*During the last year of each gubernatorial term, the commission shall conduct a survey of members of the education community, the Legislature, the Executive Branch of the state and business and industry to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the commission. A report detailing the results of the survey and any recommended changes shall be submitted to the Governor, the Legislature, the presidents and governing boards of the public institutions of higher education of this state, and the public.*

The Thirteenth Quadrennial Evaluation was conducted in August 2026 through an online survey distributed to more than 550 constituents representing higher education, business and industry, the Alabama Legislature, news media, and other stakeholder groups. Approximately 74 percent of respondents represented public and private two- and four-year colleges and universities, consistent with prior quadrennial evaluations in which higher education representatives accounted for more than 70 percent of respondents.

The quadrennial evaluation provides ACHE with an important opportunity to obtain stakeholder feedback regarding its service to the state and effectiveness in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as Alabama's coordinating board for higher education. Overall, the 2026 findings indicate strong confidence in the Commission's performance, with approximately nine in ten respondents indicating that ACHE is effectively carrying out its statutory responsibilities.

### Importance of Commission Responsibilities

When asked to rate the importance of the Commission's statutory responsibilities on a ten-point scale, respondents identified the following as ACHE's most important functions:

- *Serving as an advocate for public higher education* — **9.00**
- *Developing and recommending legislation to ensure high-quality postsecondary education* — **8.27**
- *Advising the Governor, upon request, on higher education matters* — **8.17**
- *Administering the Statewide Student Database* — **8.14**
- *Reviewing and approving/disapproving proposals for new programs or units of instruction* — **7.91**

These results demonstrate that stakeholders place particular value on ACHE's statewide advocacy, policy, data, and academic coordination responsibilities.

**Effectiveness of Commission Responsibilities**

Respondents were also asked to evaluate ACHE's effectiveness in carrying out its core responsibilities on a four-point scale. The highest-rated functions were:

- *Reviewing and approving/disapproving programs for non-Alabama institutions* — **3.45**
- *Reviewing and approving/disapproving proposals for new programs or units of instruction* — **3.42**
- *Administering the Statewide Student Database* — **3.35**
- *Reviewing proposed extensions or alterations to programs, units of instruction, research, and service* — **3.34**
- *Serving as an advocate for public higher education* — **3.34**

Overall, **85.9 percent** of respondents believe the Commission has sufficient authority to effectively carry out its statewide responsibilities, while **90.6 percent** believe ACHE is effective in performing those responsibilities.

Respondents also expressed strong confidence in Commission staff. Staff received their highest effectiveness ratings for *responding to inquiries in a timely manner* (**3.61**), *displaying positive and cooperative attitudes* (**3.59**), and *being knowledgeable about higher education issues* (**3.57**).

## Critical Issues Facing Alabama Higher Education

Respondents were asked to assess several significant issues affecting higher education in Alabama. On a five-point scale, the three issues receiving the highest ratings were:

- *Educating people for the workforce* — **4.20**
- *Teacher education and training* — **4.14**
- *Increasing student financial aid and decreasing student debt* — **4.09**

These findings reinforce the importance of aligning higher education with Alabama's workforce needs while maintaining a strong focus on affordability, access, and the preparation of educators.

## Looking Forward

Alabama higher education continues to operate in an increasingly complex, rapidly changing, and competitive environment. As the state's coordinating board, ACHE has an important role in helping colleges and universities respond to these challenges while advocating for higher education as a primary driver for the state's economic prosperity and quality of life.

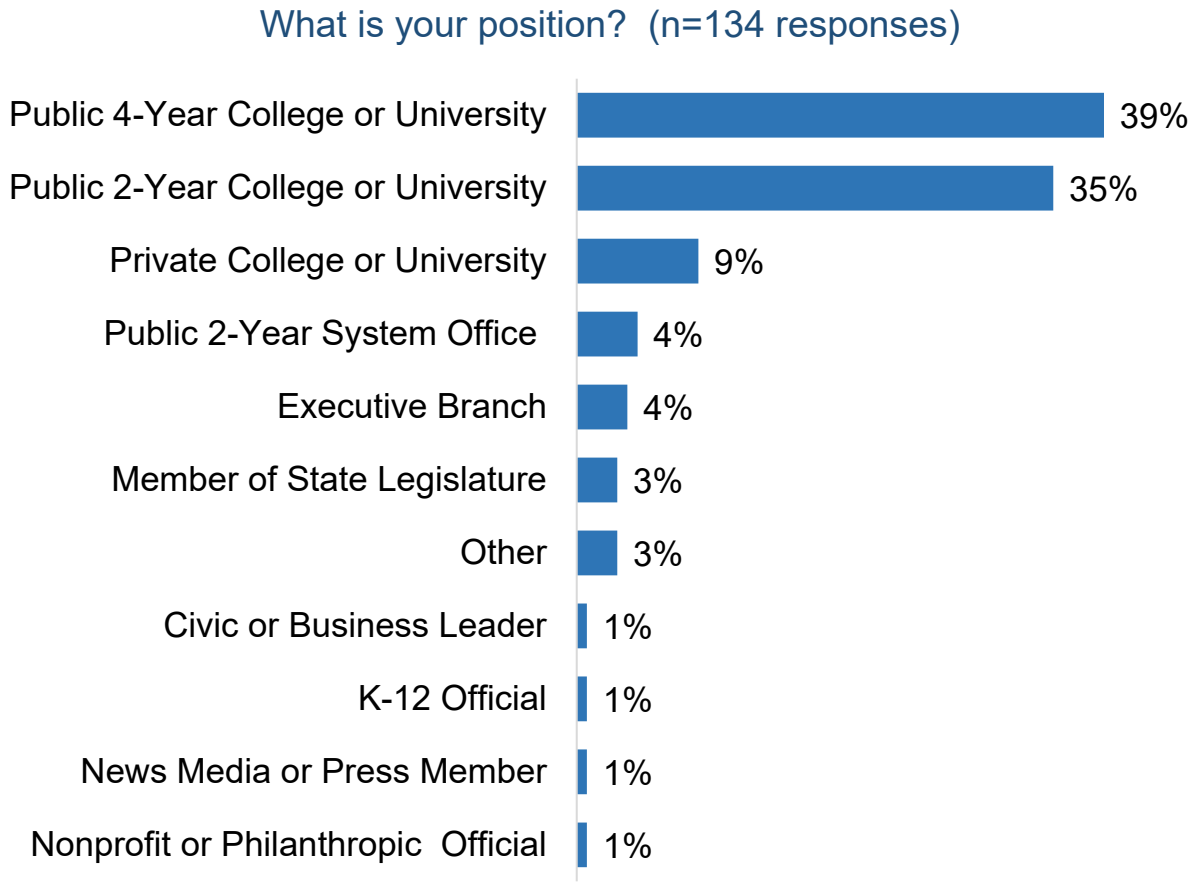
As emphasized in the 2022 Quadrennial Evaluation, continued engagement among the Commission and its staff, the Governor's Office, Legislature, business and industry, institutional leaders, and the public remains essential. Broad participation in identifying priorities and developing strategies can strengthen collaboration, build shared ownership, and help ensure that statewide higher education policy responds effectively to Alabama's changing needs.

The results of this 2026 Quadrennial Evaluation demonstrate substantial stakeholder confidence in ACHE and its staff while also identifying areas in which continued leadership and collaboration will be important. Moving forward, the Commission should build upon these strengths by continuing to advocate for higher education, strengthen statewide coordination, expand the use of data to inform policy and decision-making, support affordability and student financial aid, align educational opportunities with workforce needs, and foster partnerships that advance Alabama's system of higher education.

## Survey Overview and Findings

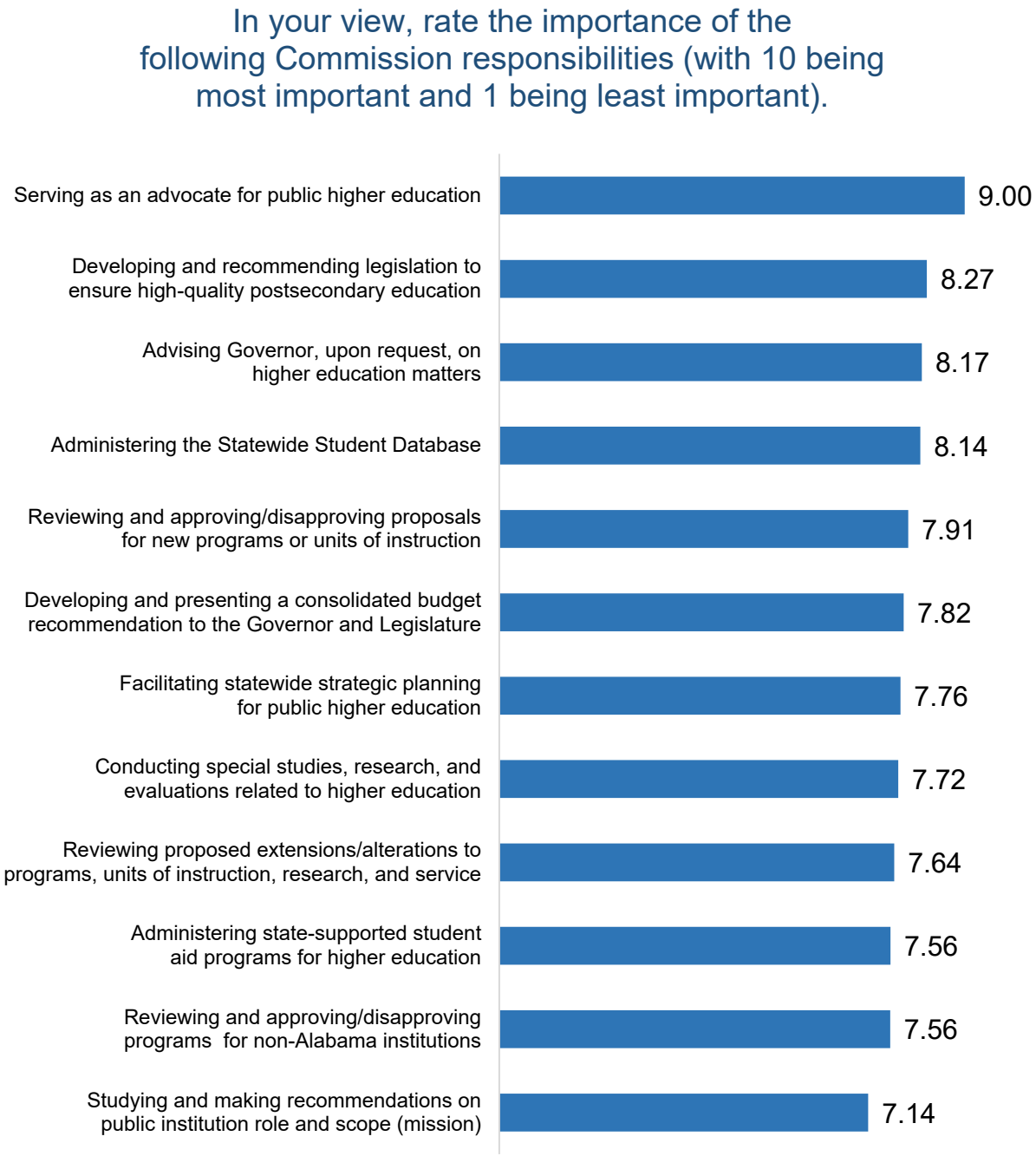
An online survey was emailed to a diverse group of over 550 constituents with 134 respondents. Most respondents, 74 percent, were officials of public two- and four-year and private institutions, which is slightly lower than the response rate of 86 percent from the same group in 2022.

The 2026 survey used the same questions from the 2022 survey to provide some historical context. A few comment options were added to some questions to give respondents an opportunity to elaborate on their responses. This year's respondent group is summarized below:



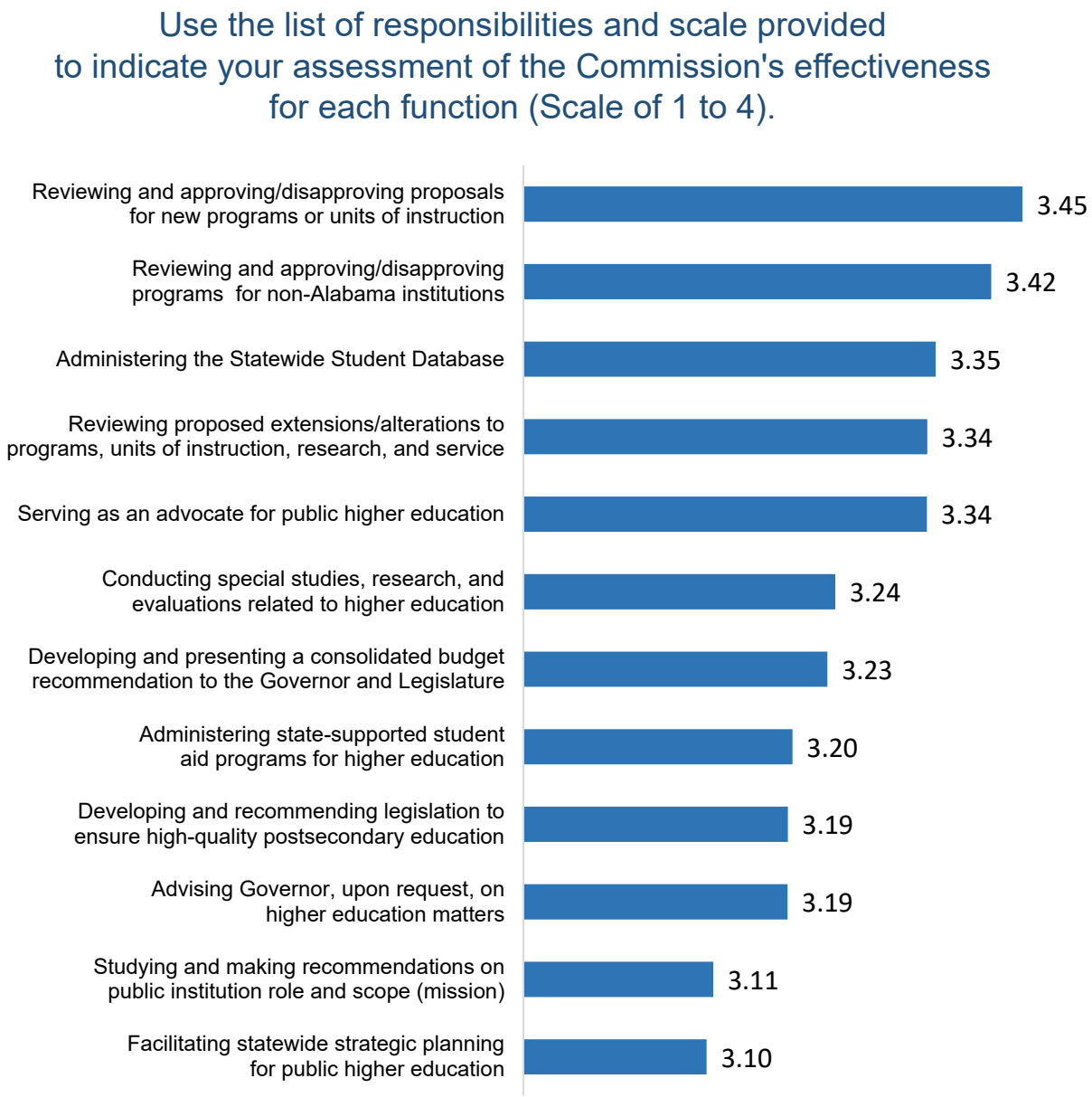
Respondents were asked to rate the *importance* of the twelve ACHE core functions on a scale from 1 to 10. *Serving as an advocate for public higher education* (9.00) was seen as the most important followed by *developing and recommending legislation to ensure high-quality postsecondary education* (8.27). *Studying and making recommendations on public institution role and scope* (7.14) was seen as the least important.

The chart below compares the ACHE responsibilities and the level of importance of each based upon those surveyed:



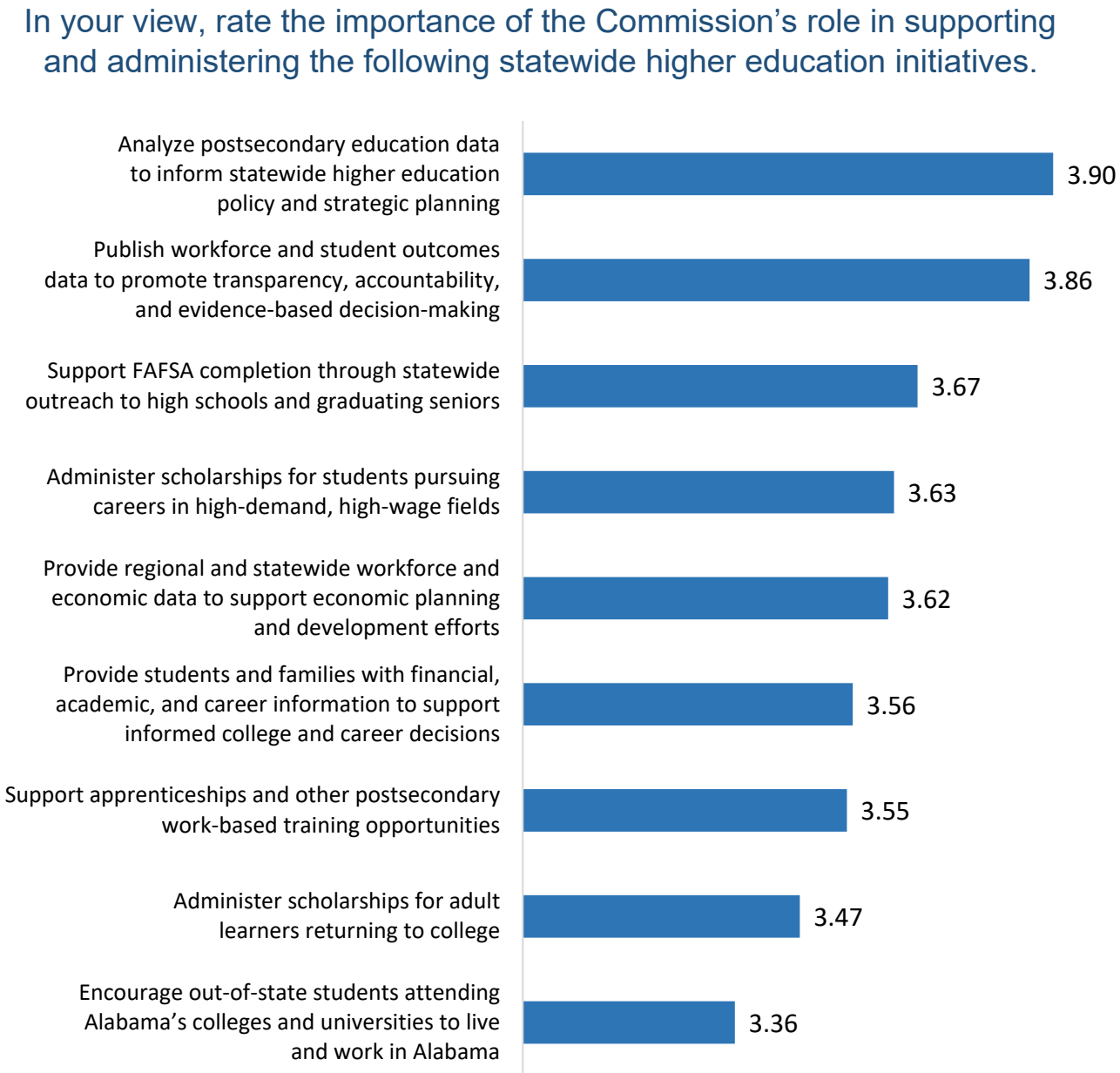
Respondents were then asked to rate the effectiveness of the same ACHE core functions from *Highly Effective* to *Not Effective* on a scale of 1 to 4. *Reviewing and approving/disapproving proposals for new programs or units of instruction for public institutions (3.45)* was seen as the function performed most effectively by the Commission. *Facilitating statewide strategic planning for public higher education* (3.10) and *Studying and making recommendations on public institution role and scope* (3.11) were seen as the functions performed least effectively.

The chart below shows the average score for each function based upon those surveyed:



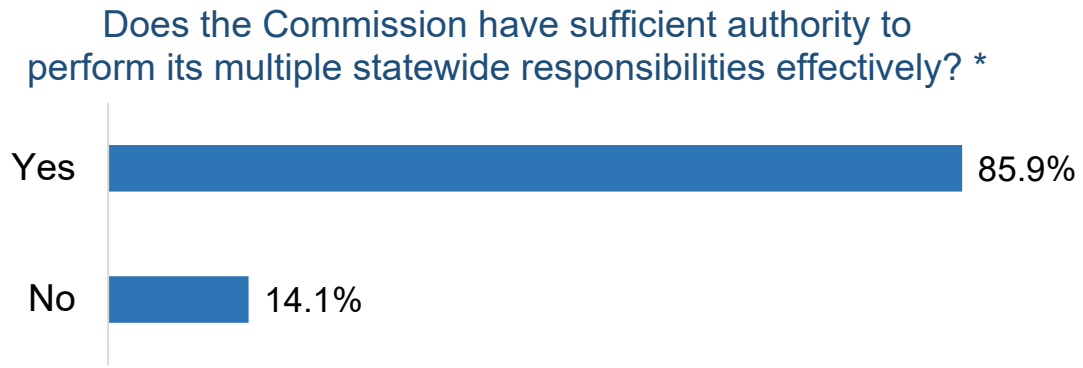
Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the Commission's role in supporting and administering statewide higher education initiatives from *Critical* to *Not Very Important* on a scale of 1 to 5. *Analyzing postsecondary data to inform statewide higher education policy and strategic planning* (3.90) was seen as the most important statewide initiative followed by *Publishing workforce and student outcomes data to promote transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decisions-making* (3.86). *Administering scholarships for adult learners* (3.47) and *Encouraging out-of-state students to live and work in Alabama* (3.36) were the lowest rated statewide initiatives.

However, it should be noted that the lowest rated initiatives at 3.36 and 3.47 were still rated as Very Important on the question's scale. The chart below shows the average score for each statewide initiative based upon those surveyed:



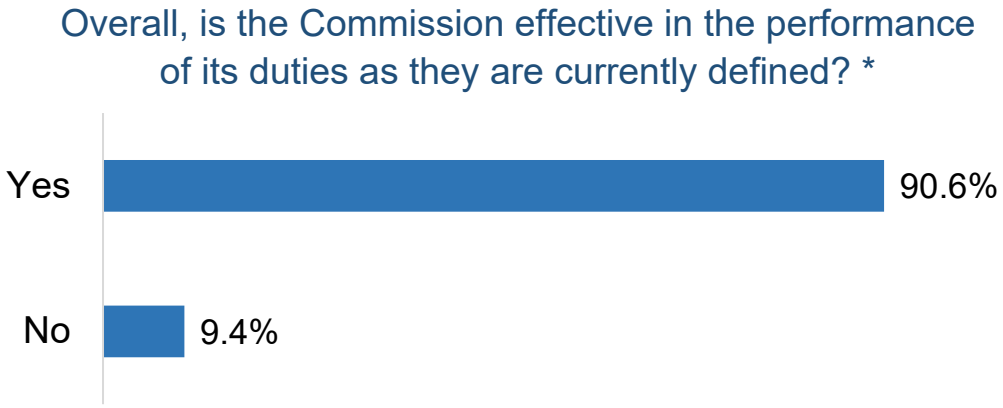
Respondents were asked to respond *Yes*, *No,* or *No Opinion* to the question: *Does the Commission have sufficient authority to perform its multiple statewide responsibilities effectively?* Almost 9-in-10 respondents (85.9%), replied *Yes* while 14.1% replied *No.*

Of the 134 total responses, 49 had *No Opinion* for this question, suggesting respondents had limited familiarity with the agency's responsibilities. The chart below shows the percentages of the responses:




Respondents were then asked to respond *Yes*, *No,* or *No Opinion* to the question: *Overall, is the Commission effective in the performance of its duties as they are currently defined?* Again, 9-in-10 (90.6%) replied *Yes* while less than ten percent (9.4%) replied *No*.

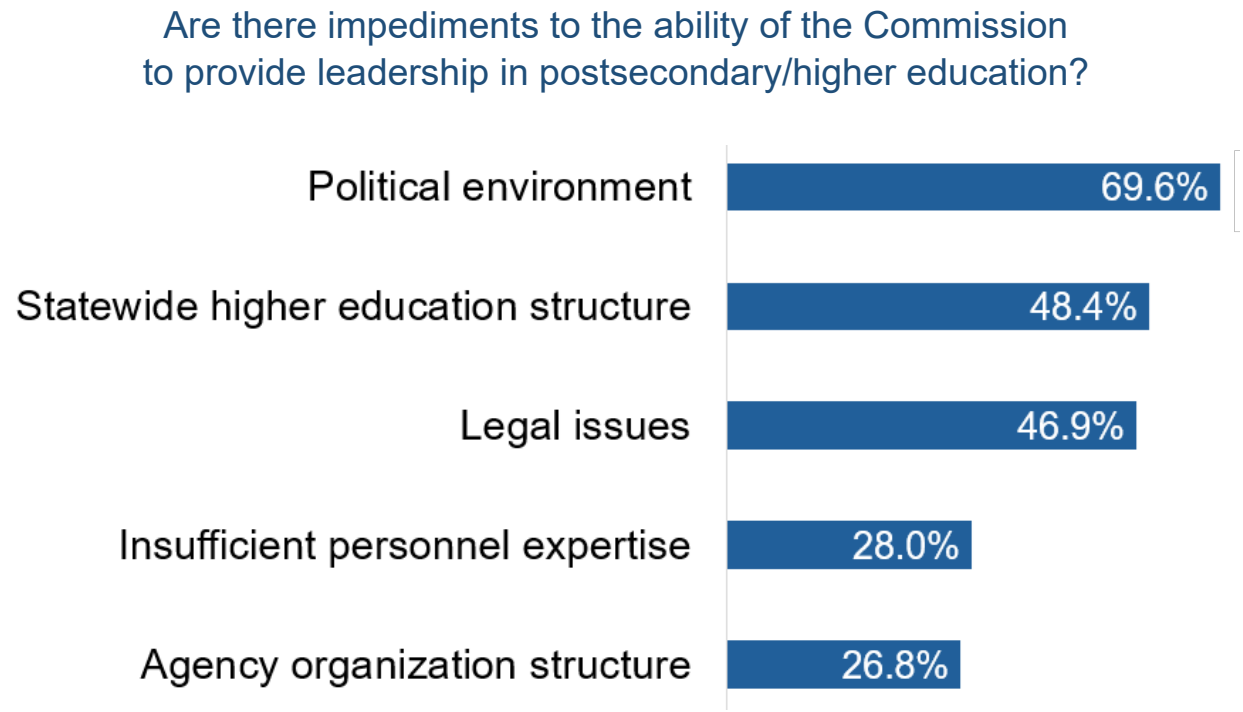
These percentages clearly show ACHE's stakeholders and constituents have a favorable opinion of the agency's performance of its duties. However, it should be noted 28 of the 134 respondents replied *No Opinion* to this question, suggesting a limited familiarity with the agency's statutory responsibilities. The chart below shows the percentages of the responses:




* Figures exclude blank and No Opinion responses.

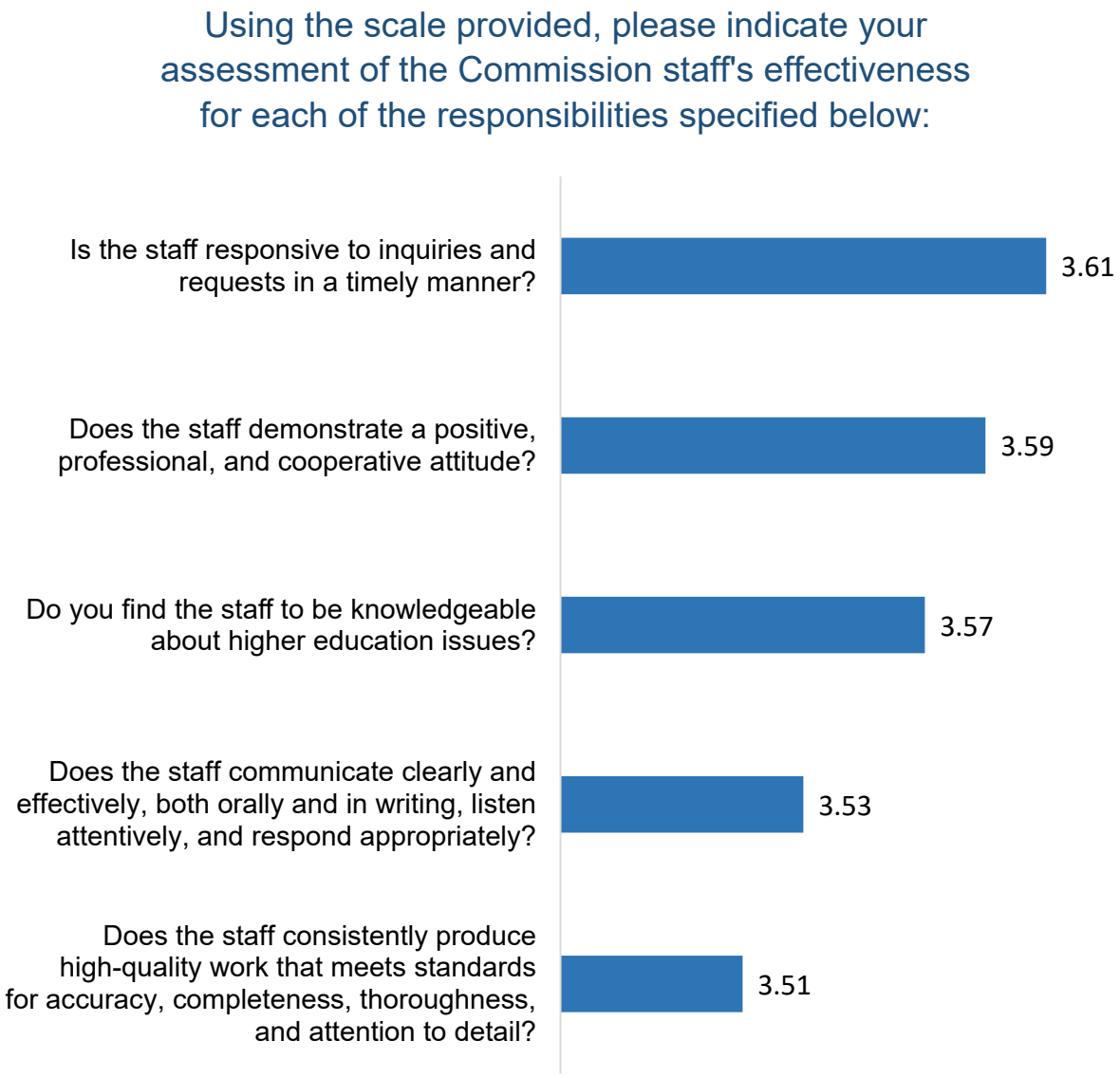
Respondents were asked to respond *Yes*, *No* or *No Opinion* to a list of potential impediments to the ability of the Commission to provide leadership in postsecondary/ higher education. *Political environment* was seen as the most significant impediment at 69.6 percent. *Agency organization structure* was seen as the least significant impediment at 26.8 percent. These responses help highlight and emphasize the ongoing need for the agency's continued collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders as well as the ongoing need for the continued advocacy for higher education.

These rankings closely parallel the responses from the 2022 and 2018 surveys. The chart below displays the responses for each potential impediment based upon those surveyed:



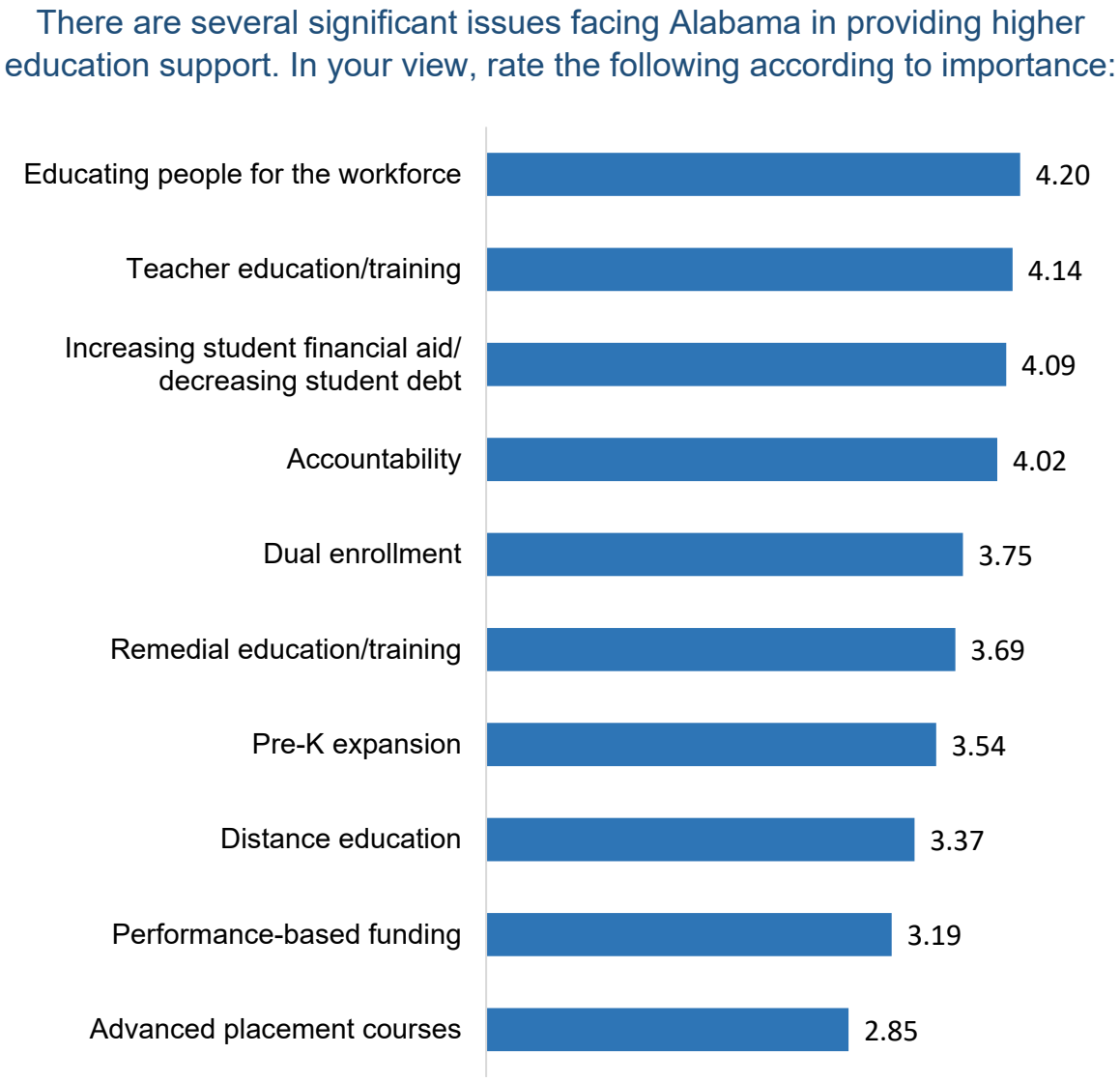
Respondents were then asked to rate the *effectiveness* of Commission *staff* responsibilities from *Highly Effective* to *Not Effective* on a scale of 1-4. *Timely response to inquiries* (3.61) and *displaying positive and cooperative attitudes* (3.59) were seen as the responsibilities performed most effectively by the staff. Overall, the respondents rated the Commission staff as effective in meeting the responsibilities of the agency.

The chart below shows the average score for each responsibility based upon those surveyed:



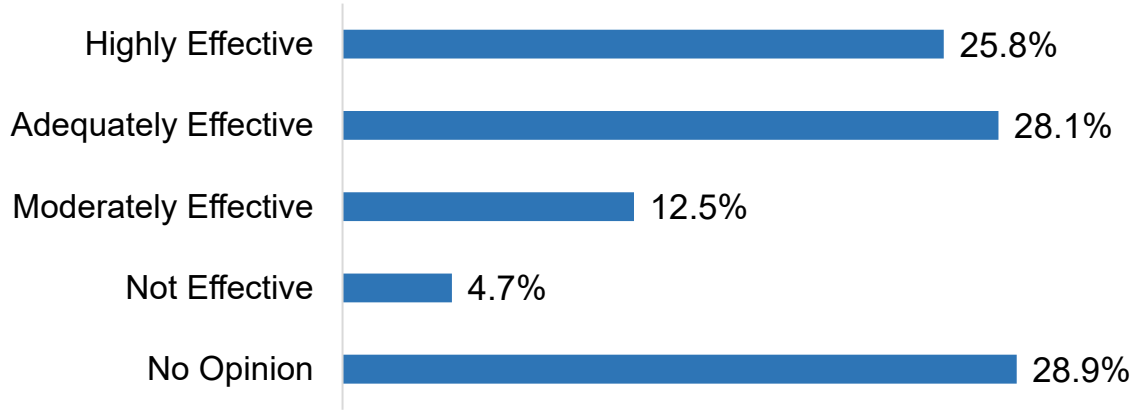
Respondents were asked to rate the importance of ten significant issues facing Alabama in providing higher education support from *Critical* to *Not Very Important* on a scale of 1 to 5. *Educating people for the workforce* (4.20) and *Teacher education/training* (4.14) were seen as the most critical issues. *Performance-based funding* (3.19) and *Advanced placement courses* (2.85) were seen as the least critical.

The chart below shows the average score for each issue based upon those surveyed:



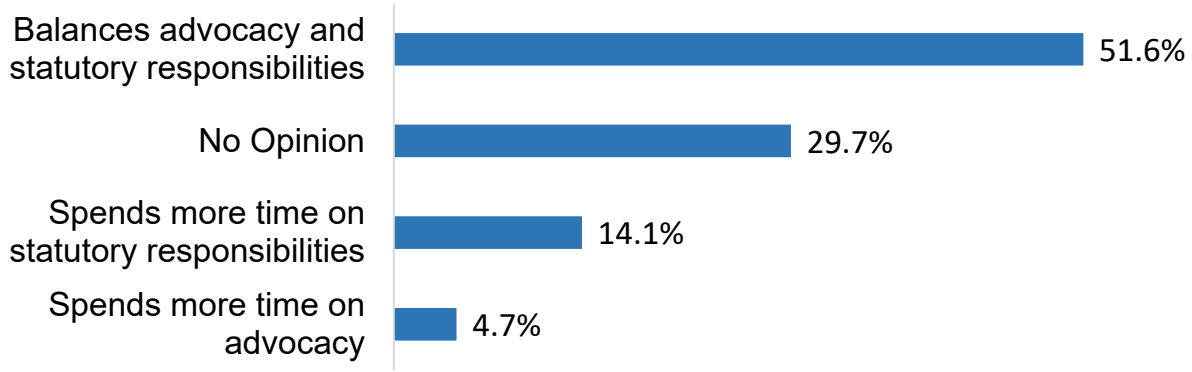
Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the Commission's efforts to consistently advance or champion higher education's strategic plan for 2018-2030 by selecting one response from *Highly Effective* to *Not Effective*. The majority, 53.9 percent, believe the Commission's efforts are adequately or highly effective while only 4.7% percent believe their efforts are not effective. The chart below shows the percentage for each level of effectiveness based on those surveyed:

How would you rate the Commissions efforts to advance or champion higher education's strategic plan for 2018-2030 entitled, *Building Human Capital: The Educational Path to Alabama's Economic Success*, with all stakeholders:




Respondents were asked if they believe the Commission spends more time on advocacy for higher education or fulfilling statutory responsibilities, or balances both equally. The majority of respondents, 51.6 percent, believe the Commission balances the two responsibilities. The chart below shows the percentage for each option selected based upon those surveyed.

In the performance of its duties, how well does the Commission balance its role between being an advocate for higher education and fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as the state's higher education coordinating board?



## Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the survey results are consistent with prior quadrennial reviews and reflect continued stakeholder confidence in the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and its role as the state's coordinating board for higher education. Nine out of ten respondents (90.6%) indicated that the Commission is meeting its statutory responsibilities.

Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the Commission's efforts in several key areas, which include continued advocacy for state-supported student financial aid and statewide efforts to increase FAFSA completion; greater emphasis on connecting postsecondary education with workforce outcomes and economic development; increased collaboration with institutions, state agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders; and continued development of interactive data resources that make higher education information more accessible and useful for decision-making.

Based on the survey results, the following measures are recommended:

- **Continue strengthening ACHE's advocacy and coordinating role**, particularly in the areas of college affordability, student access and success, state-supported financial aid, and alignment of higher education with Alabama's workforce and economic development needs.
- **Expand services and support for institutions**, including professional development, technical assistance, information sharing, and opportunities for collaboration on emerging higher education issues.
- **Continue enhancing the Statewide Student Database and related analytical resources** by providing analyses of enrollment, retention, graduation, degree production, student outcomes, and other accountability and performance measures.
- **Expand the use of data to support decision-making** by developing interactive dashboards, institutional and statewide profiles, workforce analyses, and other resources that transform statewide data into actionable information for stakeholders.
- **Continue coordination with state education, workforce, and other partner agencies** to strengthen the development and implementation of Alabama's State Longitudinal Data System and improve the ability to evaluate education, employment, and workforce outcomes.
- **Continue to identify opportunities to improve college affordability and reduce barriers to student access and completion**, including initiatives that increase FAFSA completion, strengthen access to state and federal financial aid, and expand the effective use of Open Educational Resources (OER).
- **Continue strengthening communication and engagement with institutions and other constituents** to ensure that ACHE's policy, data, and coordinating activities remain responsive to the evolving needs of Alabama's higher education community.

# Appendix A: Statistical Survey Results

Q1. What is your position? (Respondents were asked to select one response.)

**Q1 RESPONSES**

| Row Labels | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Public 4-Year College or University Official | 52 | 38.81% |
| Public 2-Year College or University Official | 47 | 35.07% |
| Private College or University Official | 12 | 8.96% |
| Public 2-Year System Office Official | 6 | 4.48% |
| Executive Branch Official | 5 | 3.73% |
| Member of State Legislature | 4 | 2.99% |
| Other | 4 | 2.99% |
| Civic or Business Leader | 1 | 0.75% |
| K-12 Official | 1 | 0.75% |
| Member of the News Media or Press | 1 | 0.75% |
| Nonprofit or Philanthropic Official | 1 | 0.75% |
| Grand Total | 134 | 100.00% |

Q2. In your view, rate the ***importance*** of the following Commission responsibilities. (Respondents were asked to rate each responsibility from 'Most important' to 'Least important' on a scale of 1-10, with 'Most important' equal to 10.)

**Q2 RESPONSES**

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | (blank) | Responses | Weighted Total | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Serve as an advocate for public higher education in Alabama | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 11 | 10 | 23 | 79 | 1 | 133 | 1197 | 9.00 |
| Develop and recommend legislation to promote a high-quality postsecondary education system | 4 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 15 | 17 | 23 | 58 | 0 | 134 | 1108 | 8.27 |
| Advise the Governor on postsecondary education matters, upon request | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 12 | 23 | 19 | 54 | 0 | 134 | 1095 | 8.17 |
| Administer the Statewide Student Database | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 16 | 14 | 23 | 53 | 2 | 132 | 1075 | 8.14 |
| Review and approve or disapprove proposals for new programs or units of instruction at public institutions of higher education | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 14 | 20 | 23 | 46 | 2 | 132 | 1044 | 7.91 |
| Develop and present consolidated budget recommendations for the public institutions of higher education to the Governor and Legislature | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 31 | 25 | 35 | 3 | 131 | 1025 | 7.82 |
| Facilitate statewide strategic planning for public higher education | 1 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 14 | 10 | 19 | 12 | 25 | 42 | 1 | 133 | 1032 | 7.76 |
| Conduct research, surveys, evaluations, and special studies related to higher education | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 14 | 10 | 17 | 18 | 24 | 39 | 0 | 134 | 1034 | 7.72 |
| Review proposed extensions and alterations to existing programs and units of instruction, research, and service for public institutions of higher education | 3 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 16 | 7 | 14 | 22 | 23 | 38 | 1 | 133 | 1016 | 7.64 |
| Operate student aid programs for the state's public institutions of higher education | 5 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 15 | 9 | 14 | 19 | 26 | 34 | 3 | 131 | 991 | 7.56 |
| Approve eligible in-state institutions to offer distance education in other states via State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) and provide consumer protection oversight for students | 0 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 11 | 21 | 18 | 20 | 37 | 0 | 134 | 1013 | 7.56 |
| Study and make recommendations regarding the mission, role, and scope of Alabama's public institutions of higher education | 9 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 13 | 11 | 14 | 19 | 23 | 31 | 1 | 133 | 949 | 7.14 |

Q3. Use the list of responsibilities and scale below to indicate your assessment of the Commission's ***effectiveness*** for each function. (Respondents were asked to rate each responsibility from 'Highly Effective' to 'Not Effective' on a scale of 1-4, with 'Highly Effective' equal to 4.)

| Q3 RESPONSES | Not Effective (1) | Minimally Effective (2) | Adequately Effective (3) | Highly Effective (4) | No Opinion (0) | (blank) | Responses | Weighted Total | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approve eligible in-state institutions to offer distance education in other states via State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) and provide consumer protection oversight for students | 3 | 1 | 49 | 56 | 22 | 3 | 109 | 376 | 3.45 |
| Review and approve or disapprove proposals for new programs or units of instruction at public institutions of higher education | 3 | 4 | 52 | 59 | 13 | 3 | 118 | 403 | 3.42 |
| Administer the Statewide Student Database | 3 | 6 | 52 | 52 | 20 | 1 | 113 | 379 | 3.35 |
| Review proposed extensions and alterations to existing programs and units of instruction, research, and service for public institutions of higher education | 4 | 5 | 54 | 53 | 15 | 3 | 116 | 388 | 3.34 |
| Serve as an advocate for public higher education in Alabama | 5 | 9 | 47 | 61 | 10 | 2 | 122 | 408 | 3.34 |
| Conduct research, surveys, evaluations, and special studies related to higher education | 4 | 13 | 49 | 49 | 16 | 3 | 115 | 373 | 3.24 |
| Develop and present consolidated budget recommendations for the public institutions of higher education to the Governor and Legislature | 5 | 11 | 51 | 48 | 17 | 2 | 115 | 372 | 3.23 |
| Operate student aid programs for the state's public institutions of higher education | 5 | 8 | 55 | 39 | 24 | 3 | 107 | 342 | 3.20 |
| Develop and recommend legislation to promote a high-quality postsecondary education system | 5 | 10 | 58 | 42 | 15 | 4 | 115 | 367 | 3.19 |
| Advise the Governor on postsecondary education matters, upon request | 6 | 8 | 55 | 41 | 21 | 3 | 110 | 351 | 3.19 |
| Study and make recommendations regarding the mission, role, and scope of Alabama's public institutions of higher education | 6 | 16 | 48 | 40 | 21 | 3 | 110 | 342 | 3.11 |
| Facilitate statewide strategic planning for public higher education | 5 | 16 | 59 | 38 | 14 | 2 | 118 | 366 | 3.10 |

## Q4. In your view, rate the importance of the Commission's role in supporting and administering the following statewide higher education initiatives:

**Q4 RESPONSES**

| | Not Very Important (1) | Somewhat Important (2) | Important (3) | Very Important (4) | Critical (5) | No Opinion (0) | (blank) | Responses | Weighted Total | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Support FAFSA completion through statewide outreach to high schools and graduating seniors | 7 | 15 | 25 | 47 | 34 | 6 | 0 | 128 | 470 | 3.67 |
| Administer scholarships for students pursuing careers in high-demand, high-wage fields | 8 | 10 | 36 | 42 | 32 | 5 | 1 | 128 | 464 | 3.63 |
| Administer scholarships for adult learners returning to college | 9 | 17 | 34 | 44 | 26 | 3 | 1 | 130 | 451 | 3.47 |
| Support apprenticeships and other postsecondary work-based training opportunities | 6 | 19 | 31 | 42 | 30 | 6 | 0 | 128 | 455 | 3.55 |
| Encourage out-of-state students attending Alabama's colleges and universities to live and work in Alabama | 8 | 23 | 34 | 41 | 22 | 5 | 1 | 128 | 430 | 3.36 |
| Provide regional and statewide workforce and economic data to support economic planning and development efforts | 6 | 13 | 36 | 45 | 30 | 4 | 0 | 130 | 470 | 3.62 |
| Provide students and families with financial, academic, and career information to support informed college and career decisions | 8 | 13 | 36 | 45 | 29 | 3 | 0 | 131 | 467 | 3.56 |
| Analyze postsecondary education data to inform statewide higher education policy and strategic planning | 6 | 10 | 23 | 42 | 48 | 4 | 1 | 129 | 503 | 3.90 |
| Publish workforce and student outcomes data to promote transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making | 4 | 9 | 33 | 38 | 45 | 4 | 1 | 129 | 498 | 3.86 |

Q5. Does the Commission have sufficient authority to perform its multiple statewide responsibilities effectively? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Yes,' 'No' or 'No Opinion'.)

**Q5 RESPONSES**

| Row Labels | Overall Total Frequency | Total Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| No | 12 | 12 | 14.1% |
| Yes | 73 | 73 | 85.9% |
| No Opinion | 49 | | |
| Grand Total | 134 | 85 | |

Q6. Overall, is the Commission effective in the performance of its duties as they are currently defined? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Yes,' 'No' or 'No Opinion'.)

**Q6 RESPONSES**

| Row Labels | Overall Total Frequency | Total Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| No | 10 | 10 | 9.4% |
| Yes | 96 | 96 | 90.6% |
| No Opinion | 28 | | |
| Grand Total | 134 | 106 | |

Q7. Are there impediments to the ability of the Commission to provide leadership in postsecondary/higher education? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Yes,' 'No' or 'No Opinion' to each impediment.)

**Q7 RESPONSES**

| | Yes | No | No Opinion | (blank) | Responses | Percent Yes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political environment | 64 | 28 | 40 | 2 | 92 | 69.6% |
| Statewide higher education structure | 45 | 48 | 38 | 3 | 93 | 48.4% |
| Legal issues | 38 | 43 | 51 | 2 | 81 | 46.9% |
| Insufficient agency personnel expertise | 21 | 54 | 54 | 5 | 75 | 28.0% |
| Agency organization structure | 19 | 52 | 58 | 5 | 71 | 26.8% |

Q8. Using the scale provided, please indicate your assessment of the Commission staff's effectiveness for each of the responsibilities specified below. (Respondents were asked to rate each function from 'Highly Effective' to 'Not Effective' on a scale of 1-4, with 'Highly Effective' equal to 4.)

**Q8 RESPONSES**

| | Not Effective (1) | Minimally Effective (2) | Adequately Effective (3) | Highly Effective (4) | No Opinion (0) | (blank) | Responses | Weighted Total | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Is the staff responsive to inquiries and requests in a timely manner? | 1 | 4 | 36 | 78 | 12 | 3 | 119 | 429 | 3.61 |
| Does the staff demonstrate a positive, professional, and cooperative attitude? | 1 | 5 | 37 | 80 | 7 | 4 | 123 | 442 | 3.59 |
| Do you find the staff to be knowledgeable about higher education issues? | 1 | 6 | 37 | 78 | 9 | 3 | 122 | 436 | 3.57 |
| Does the staff communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing, listen attentively, and respond appropriately? | 1 | 9 | 36 | 76 | 8 | 4 | 122 | 431 | 3.53 |
| Does the staff consistently produce high-quality work that meets standards for accuracy, completeness, thoroughness, and | 2 | 8 | 38 | 75 | 8 | 3 | 123 | 432 | 3.51 |

Q9. There are a number of significant issues facing Alabama in providing higher education support. In your view, rate the following according to importance. (Respondents were asked to rate each issue from 'Critical' to 'Not Very Important' on a scale of 1-5, with 'Critical' equal to 5.)

**Q9 RESPONSES**

| | Not Very Important (1) | Somewhat Important (2) | Important (3) | Very Important (4) | Critical (5) | No Opinion (0) | (blank) | Responses | Weighted Total | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educating people for the workforce | 0 | 6 | 21 | 41 | 59 | 1 | 6 | 127 | 534 | 4.20 |
| Teacher education/training | 0 | 8 | 22 | 40 | 56 | 1 | 7 | 126 | 522 | 4.14 |
| Increasing student financial aid/decreasing student debt | 0 | 8 | 29 | 33 | 56 | 2 | 6 | 126 | 515 | 4.09 |
| Accountability | 1 | 9 | 24 | 45 | 48 | 1 | 6 | 127 | 511 | 4.02 |
| Dual enrollment | 1 | 15 | 35 | 38 | 37 | 2 | 6 | 126 | 473 | 3.75 |
| Remedial education/training | 2 | 15 | 30 | 45 | 29 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 447 | 3.69 |
| Pre-K expansion | 6 | 24 | 20 | 41 | 30 | 7 | 6 | 121 | 428 | 3.54 |
| Distance education | 5 | 25 | 36 | 34 | 23 | 4 | 7 | 123 | 414 | 3.37 |
| Performance-based funding | 15 | 26 | 26 | 29 | 25 | 6 | 7 | 121 | 386 | 3.19 |
| Advanced placement courses | 17 | 32 | 38 | 27 | 10 | 3 | 7 | 124 | 353 | 2.85 |

Q10. How would you rate the Commission's efforts to consistently advance or champion higher education's strategic plan for 2018-2030 entitled, *Building Human Capital: The Educational Path to Alabama's Economic Success*, with all stakeholders: educational leaders, policymakers, the press, and the general public? (Respondents were asked to select one response from 'Highly Effective' to 'Not Effective'.)

**Q10 RESPONSES**

| Row Labels | Overall Total Frequency | Total Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Highly Effective | 33 | 33 | 36.3% |
| Adequately Effective | 36 | 36 | 39.6% |
| Moderately Effective | 16 | 16 | 17.6% |
| Not Effective | 6 | 6 | 6.6% |
| No Opinion | 37 | | |
| (blank) | 6 | | |
| Grand Total | 134 | 91 | |

Q11. In the performance of its duties, how well does the Commission balance its role between being an advocate for higher education and fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as the state's higher education coordinating board? (Respondents were asked to check one response.)

**Q11 RESPONSES**

| Row Labels | Overall Total Frequency | Total Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Balances advocacy and statutory responsibilities | 66 | 66 | 73.3% |
| Spends more time on advocacy | 6 | 6 | 6.7% |
| Spends more time on statutory responsibilities | 18 | 18 | 20.0% |
| No Opinion | 38 | | |
| (blank) | 6 | | |
| Grand Total | 134 | 90 | |

# Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations from Current and Past Quadrennial Reviews

**ACHE Recommendations, 2026**

- **Continue strengthening ACHE's advocacy and coordinating role**, particularly in the areas of college affordability, student access and success, state-supported financial aid, and alignment of higher education with Alabama's workforce and economic development needs.

- **Expand services and support for institutions**, including professional development, technical assistance, information sharing, and opportunities for collaboration on emerging higher education issues.

- **Continue enhancing the Statewide Student Database and related analytical resources** by providing analyses of enrollment, retention, graduation, degree production, student outcomes, and other accountability and performance measures.

- **Expand the use of data to support decision-making** by developing interactive dashboards, institutional and statewide profiles, workforce analyses, and other resources that transform statewide data into actionable information for stakeholders.

- **Continue coordination with state education, workforce, and other partner agencies** to strengthen the development and implementation of Alabama's State Longitudinal Data System and improve the ability to evaluate education, employment, and workforce outcomes.

- **Continue identifying opportunities to improve college affordability and reduce barriers to student access and completion**, including initiatives that increase FAFSA completion, strengthen access to state and federal financial aid, and expand the effective use of Open Educational Resources (OER).

- **Continue strengthening communication and engagement with institutions and other constituents** to ensure that ACHE's policy, data, and coordinating activities remain responsive to the evolving needs of Alabama's higher education community.

## ACHE Recommendations, 2022

Based on the survey results, the following measures are recommended:

- Continue focus on advocacy and coordination of higher education, including affordability and expanded student aid programs.

- Expand services to campuses including professional development.

- Continue to provide valuable data through the Statewide Student Database and work to provide even more objective analyses and reports on important measures such as enrollment, retention and graduation rates, and accountability metrics.

- Continue to coordinate with state education and non-education agencies on the development and implementation of the State Longitudinal Data System.

- Continue to investigate cost-saving measures for students, i.e., the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completions and Open-Educational Resources (OER).

## ACHE Recommendations, 2018

1. If ACHE and the state choose Model 1, the ACHE Commission and staff should carefully review past recommendations and those offered here to select only those that they believe add value and do not face significant barriers to implementation. Those few goals should be memorialized in a formal document with specific outcome expectations, and the Commission should review progress on those commitments at every meeting.

2. The issues that cause us to propose statutory revisions in Model 2 are systemic. They are not the fault of any individual or organization. If ACHE and the state choose to pursue Model 2, the appropriate process would rely heavily on discussions that include representatives of all the key stakeholders and on the expertise and best judgment of the ACHE staff.

3. If the statute is revised, we suggest that it not be done piecemeal, and that adequate time for deliberation and consultation be set aside to prepare the revisions.

4. We strongly recommend that any revisions in ACHE duties confirm the fundamental premise that there will be no reductions in staff size and that existing staff will have opportunities to re-tool if/as needed. Alabama higher education needs what this staff can provide, and their experience and relationships in the system are invaluable.

## ACHE Recommendations, 2014

Based on interviews, survey results, written materials, and the evaluation committee's experience, the committee presented two approaches for strengthening ACHE: **Model 1**, focused on improving current operations, and **Model 2**, focused on reconsidering ACHE's statutory responsibilities to better address Alabama's evolving higher education priorities.

### Model 1: Improve Current Functioning

Many recommendations echoed earlier quadrennial evaluations. The committee encouraged ACHE to strengthen Commissioner orientation and professional development, devote more Commission meeting time to strategic policy discussions, periodically conduct retreats, establish clearer expectations for Commissioners, and increase engagement with the Legislature and business community.
The committee also recommended ACHE:

- Expand use of the Statewide Student Database to provide more meaningful trend, comparative, and policy-oriented analyses for state and institutional decision-makers.
- Continue shifting statewide planning toward major policy priorities affecting Alabama rather than primarily institutional concerns, with measurable goals and greater engagement of the Governor, Legislature, institutional leaders, business community, and public.
- Provide greater consumer information regarding institutional outcomes, affordability, student debt, employment, retention, and graduation.
- Strengthen collaboration among institutions around statewide priorities and opportunities for greater efficiency.

### Model 2: Restructure and Reinvigorate ACHE

The committee concluded that longstanding structural and statutory constraints limited ACHE's ability to fully assume a statewide policy leadership role. It recommended a comprehensive review of ACHE's statutory responsibilities to increase flexibility and concentrate agency resources on functions providing the greatest statewide value.
Major recommendations included:

- Strengthen ACHE's role in statewide policy leadership, strategic planning, data analysis, and public information.
- Expand the Statewide Student Database and make data-informed analysis more accessible to policymakers and education leaders.
- Focus statewide planning on a limited number of measurable priorities addressing access, attainment, affordability, student success, workforce needs, and economic development.
- Encourage greater institutional collaboration and reduce counterproductive competition.

- Reconsider ACHE's regulatory role in new academic program approval and emphasize evaluation of existing program productivity and effectiveness.
- Reevaluate responsibilities related to institutional budget requests, facilities master plans, and other activities that may provide limited value relative to the resources required.
- Produce regular policy-oriented reports or a statewide higher education "report card" incorporating trends and performance indicators such as attainment, access, retention, completion, affordability, research, and workforce-related outcomes.
- Strengthen Commissioner orientation, ongoing development, and periodic self-evaluation and consider statewide development opportunities for institutional trustees.

  Overall, the evaluation envisioned ACHE evolving from an agency emphasizing regulatory and administrative coordination toward a stronger **statewide coordinating, policy, planning, data, and strategic leadership role**, while retaining statutory responsibilities that continue to provide clear value to Alabama higher education and the state.

**ACHE Recommendations 2010**

1. Raising and informing issues in reports and other communications for debate, discussion, and action by policy makers, educators, and the public.
2. ACHE's most powerful potential role is to provide information as an advocate for a well- educated citizenry and workforce for Alabama—to elucidate problems for those with the means to pursue solutions.
3. ACHE could be more involved with these matters by reallocating resources from some of the more time-consuming and less valuable activities, and by identifying simpler, more straightforward and possibly less regulatory approaches.
4. The State Plan for higher education, Forging Strategic Alliances: 2009-2014, should be the guide for much of ACHE's work in statewide policy leadership and in encouraging statewide policy discussions.
5. The focus of the State Plan for higher education on overall state educational achievement is admirable. But ACHE should clarify higher and postsecondary's expectations and responsibilities for achieving the Plan's priorities and goals.
6. Using the statewide student database, ACHE should produce more on statewide or regional education issues that illuminate policy debates and options and strategic issues for the legislature and Governor.
7. ACHE should also seek to overcome resistance and expand collection of course-level data, which is needed to help learn how to improve student retention, streamline the education process, analyze opportunities for collaboration, and other meaningful purposes.
8. ACHE should consider retaining new program review only for the purpose of ensuring academic quality, adherence to academic mission, and, where relevant, the state's need for graduates in that field. Program duplication has all

but disappeared as a rational criterion for program review in most states; the time has come to reconsider it in Alabama.

9. The ACHE process of building a consolidated budget recommendation appears to be a worthwhile process but may be unnecessarily cumbersome. The time required to crunch the numbers should be the minimum necessary to provide credible benchmarks.
10. The mandated ACHE capital funding request and annual updates to the facilities master plan appear to be meaningless exercises without state capital support and should be discontinued.
11. ACHE should consider seeking the blessings of the Governor and legislature to create a broad institutional-based study group to develop and recommend a strong, fair, and equitable funding formula (or financing plan) that would be used to build the consolidated budget recommendation and fund institutions.
12. ACHE should be a stronger voice for affordability and expanded student aid programs. Going forward, using its research capacity, ACHE should bring visibility to institutional and state policymakers on the affordability problem, including comparable data with other southern states.
13. ACHE should devise a strategy to revitalize the Council of Presidents through fewer meetings but more compelling agendas.
14. ACHE should host an annual or biannual Governor's Conference for the board members of all public and private institutions.
15. Commission meetings should devote sufficient time, if not a majority of time, to assessing progress on the State Plan for Higher Education.
16. Alabama's new Governor should create a PK-20 Council by executive order, or propose legislation to do so.
17. The Governor should consider allowing the executive director of the Commission to sit with the Governor's cabinet. This should not be as the Governor's appointee member of the cabinet, however, but as the head of an important agency.
18. ACHE should be formally included on, and participate in, the State Workforce Planning Council.
19. To ensure high caliber individuals on the Commission as vacancies occur, a statement of desirable qualifications and Commission member responsibilities should be developed by the Commission as a guide to the Governor and other elected leaders when making appointments.
20. The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House need to make appointments to the ACHE Commission in a timely manner when vacancies occur. Doing so will ensure a vital Commission and agency and continuity for policy decision making.