



June 11, 2010

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On behalf of the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) Board of Directors, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on your recent study entitled *"Public College and University Procurement: A Survey of the State Regulatory Environment, Institutional Procurement Practices and Efforts Toward Cost Containment"* and specifically the recommendations for states contained in the report.

NASPO represents the chief procurement officers and directors of the central purchasing offices in each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia, and is dedicated to providing leadership in professional public procurement, improving the quality of procurement, exchanging information, and cooperating to attain greater efficiency, economy and customer satisfaction. One of the primary tenants of this mission is to advance the fundamental principles of sound public procurement which include fair and open competition, the establishment of a single, comprehensive procurement system defined in statute that standardizes the policies and procedures for acquiring goods and services, and aggregating requirements and demand for these goods and services to maximize taxpayer value.

Many of the recommendations contained in your report support these principles and are consistent with procurement reform activities that states have undertaken in recent years to streamline the acquisition process for agencies, institutions and political subdivisions. Some of the more visible examples of these reforms include increased delegation authority, contract awards based on factors other than price (e.g., best value, past performance, etc.), greater use of cooperative purchasing with other public entities, and an emphasis on sustainable procurement considerations.

However, we do have two areas of concern with the recommendations. First, the suggestion to provide greater autonomy to systems and institutions regarding procurement policy has the potential to fragment public procurement authority and create disparate systems with inconsistent policies and procedures, resulting in confusion and unnecessary duplication of effort and expense by both the users and the supplier community. In addition, recent efforts to provide greater transparency and accountability for public expenditures, such as those relating to federal stimulus monies, would be more difficult to achieve.

Second, relaxing or eliminating state preferences or mandates involving the awarding of certain contracts is inconsistent with legislative or executive intent to promote economic development opportunities or important social responsibility goals.

In summary, we applaud your effort to improve the higher education procurement process through a combination of reforms and cost saving opportunities. We would welcome a dialogue with your organizations and members on how this can best be accomplished.

Please contact me at (503) 378-3529 or Jack Gallt, NASPO's Association Director, at (859) 514-9159 to determine how we might begin a conversation between our respective organizations.

Sincerely,

Dianne Lancaster  
NASPO President  
Chief Procurement Officer, State of Oregon

cc: NASPO Board of Directors  
Jack Gallt, NASPO Association Director  
Doreen Murner, NAEP Executive Director  
Muriel A. Howard, AASCU President