ECS Challenges States to Step Up in Remedial Education

Policy framework to help set path

Denver, Colorado: Today, the Education Commission of the States released a policy framework on how states can develop comprehensive policies for increasing the college success of students who require remedial education.

“We can no longer rely on incremental, institutionally based changes to remedial instruction, but instead must use policy to develop state and postsecondary system strategies that can be implemented, evaluated and continuously improved,” said Bruce Vandal, director of Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development at ECS and director of Getting Past Go, a 50-state initiative to leverage policy to improve the success of remedial education students.

The framework, “Rebuilding the Remedial Education Bridge to College Success,” was developed by ECS and its project partners, Knowledge in the Public Interest (KPI) and Policy Research in Preparation, Access and Remedial Education (PRePARE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The project partners analyzed state and system remedial education policies, reviewed the latest research on remedial education and conducted forums with remedial education leaders from throughout the nation to develop the framework.

The framework makes the case for making remedial education a key component of state strategies to increase college attainment. It challenges states to look more carefully at the data they collect, funds they appropriate, ways they assess and place students, instructional models they utilize and the accountability mechanisms they rely on to meet the needs of remedial education students.

“We must look beyond the current view that remedial education is a symptom of our collective failures to prepare students for higher education. With approximately 42 million adults between the ages of 18 and 64 in our nation who do not have a college degree and are lacking college-ready skills, it is time to treat remedial education as an important and necessary solution to our nation’s goal to have the highest college attainment rates in the world by 2025,” said Vandal.

“We can no longer afford business as usual with remedial education. There are new innovative strategies and policies being implemented all across the country. It is time that we use policy to move these innovations to scale,” said Paula Myrick Short, vice-chancellor of academic affairs at the Tennessee Board of Regents. She has provided leadership to the nationally recognized Developmental Studies Redesign Initiative at the Tennessee Board of Regents that is using technology to redesign remedial education courses at all of the system’s campuses.
Getting Past Go (GPG) will be working with state and institutional leaders from across the country to identify and implement model policies to ensure that students complete their remedial education as quickly and effectively as possible.

GPG is using social media strategies to engage state policy leaders and provide them with the latest information on remedial education reform across the nation. In addition, the project will provide technical assistance to states that currently are reviewing their state and system policies.

The policy framework and other project resources are available at the project Web site at: http://gettingpastgo.org.

Getting Past Go is funded through a three-year grant from Lumina Foundation for Education, which works to ensure that 60% of Americans are college-educated by 2025.

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ECS is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

Lumina Foundation for Education is committed to enrolling and graduating more students from college — especially low-income students, students of color, first-generation students and adult learners. Our goal is to increase the percentage of Americans who hold high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina pursues this goal in three ways: by identifying and supporting effective practice, through public policy advocacy, and by using our communications and convening power to build public will for change.

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