Education Commission of the States to “Boost College Completion” Efforts in States

ECS will work closely with state legislators

DENVER, CO – At the Education Commission of the States’ (ECS) Winter Commissioners’ Meeting, ECS President Roger Sampson announced a new college completion initiative, *Boosting College Completion for a New Workforce*.

This two-year initiative, funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will work with state legislators to examine the impact of improved college completion rates on their state economies and identify strategies that promote college attainment. The goal is to increase the number of state residents who earn a college credential and acquire high-demand, livable wage jobs.

ECS will convene key leaders in states to identify strategies that support state college completion goals. In addition, ECS will develop an online database of state policies that target college completion. The database will be the foundation of state profiles that will allow states to compare their strategies to other states and identify innovative strategies.

The ECS initiative will work closely with other national college completion efforts like Complete College America and the National Governors Association’s Complete to Compete initiative — by utilizing the college completion metrics established by those two initiatives and coordinating efforts in states.

ECS will identify measures that assess the impact of improved college completion on state economic and workforce development goals. “The goal is for states to explore not only how they can increase college completion, but to ensure that those who earn a credential have the skills they need to find a livable wage job in an increasingly competitive global economy,” notes Sampson.

With most state legislatures facing difficult state budget forecasts and economic conditions, it is more important than ever for legislators to think creatively about how to improve the skills of their residents. “Legislators need the support of organizations like ECS to provide them with the ideas and advice they need to meet the educational and economic challenges our states are facing,” said Senator Luther Olsen, Chair of the Wisconsin State Senate’s Education Committee.

Colorado Gov.-elect John Hickenlooper, incoming ECS Chair, said, “Increasing the college completion rate is a critical strategy that governors across the country are embracing to create the kind of jobs that contribute to strong state
economies. We are excited to work with other state leaders from across the nation on this important initiative."

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, outgoing ECS Chair, added, “The U.S. requires a highly educated workforce if it is going to successfully compete in the global economy. Increasing the number of citizens with postsecondary credentials and moving them into the workforce is the best strategy for ensuring future economic growth and prosperity.”

The Boosting College Completion for a New Workforce initiative was officially launched at the December 8-10, 2010 meeting of ECS Commissioners in Las Vegas, Nevada. The initiative also will be the focus of the ECS National Forum on Education Policy in Denver, Colorado from July 6-8, 2011.

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The Education Commission of the States (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 (www.ecs.org) was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

Helping State Leaders Shape Education Policy