

# Georgia Honored with 2026 Frank Newman Award for Transforming College Access Through GEORGIA

## For Immediate Release

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**WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 9, 2026** — Education Commission of the States (ECS) today announced the State of Georgia as the recipient of the 2026 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation in recognition of GEORGIA MATCH, the nation's most comprehensive statewide direct admissions initiative designed to expand postsecondary access and strengthen workforce pathways.

The award will be presented during the 2026 ECS National Forum on Education Policy in Washington, D.C.

Created under the leadership of Governor Brian P. Kemp and launched in 2023, GEORGIA MATCH automatically connects Georgia high school seniors with public colleges and universities where they already meet academic eligibility requirements — helping students navigate the transition from high school to higher education with greater clarity, confidence and access.

Each year, more than 132,000 Georgia seniors receive personalized information outlining the public institutions for which they qualify, alongside access to an online dashboard that allows students to compare schools, explore programs, request information and begin the enrollment process.

*"GEORGIA MATCH reflects the kind of bold, student-centered innovation the Frank Newman Award was created to recognize," said **Jose Muñoz, president of Education Commission of the States.** "Georgia has demonstrated what is possible when state leaders work across agencies and systems to remove barriers, expand opportunity and create clearer pathways to education and career success for every student."*

GEORGIA MATCH was developed through a collaborative partnership among the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Governor's Office of Student Achievement, Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Student Finance Commission, Technical College System of Georgia and University System of Georgia.

By eliminating application fees, reducing administrative hurdles and leveraging existing student data to proactively connect

students with postsecondary opportunities, the initiative has helped redefine how states can support college access at scale.

*"We believe every Georgia student deserves a clear pathway to opportunity," said **Chris Green, president of the Georgia Student Finance Commission.** "GEORGIA MATCH sends a powerful message to students across our state that there is a place for them in higher education and in Georgia's growing economy. We are honored to receive this national recognition from Education Commission of the States."*

The GEORGIA MATCH initiative has received broad bipartisan support from policymakers, education leaders, employers and communities across Georgia and has emerged as a national model for aligning education and workforce development efforts.

The Frank Newman Award for State Innovation recognizes states and territories that have enacted bold, bipartisan education policies or implemented innovative programs with meaningful statewide impact and lessons for other states. The award is named in honor of the late Frank Newman, who served as ECS president for 14 years and championed transformative state leadership in education policy.

### **About Education Commission of the States**

Education Commission of the States is a trusted source for comprehensive knowledge and resources on hundreds of education policy issues from early learning through postsecondary education. The organization partners with state leaders by providing unbiased information, research, customized support and opportunities for collaboration.