



400 West 15th Street, Suite 408
Austin, Texas 78701
877-475-7827
fax 512-322-9227
www.centerforstatescholars.org
info@centerforstatescholars.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian Ferguson, Chair
Chairman and CEO
Eastman Chemical Co.

E. Linn Draper, Jr.
Chairman, President and CEO
American Electric Power

Ray Elliott
Chairman, President, and CEO
Zimmer Holdings, Inc.

Tom Houlihan
Executive Director
Council of Chief State School Officers

Robert A. Mosbacher, Jr.
President and CEO
Mosbacher Energy

STAFF

Drew Scheberle
Interim Executive Director

Sharon Holleman
Implementation

Adrienne Lallo
Marketing & Communications

Jody Lazo
Operations

George Purcell, Jr.
Research & Evaluation

Joe Randolph
Implementation

Nancy Rose
Corporate Relations

State Scholars Initiative

The State Scholars Initiative is a simple, low-cost, high-impact strategy to motivate students to complete high school courses that prepare them for college and careers. The Initiative places business people in classrooms to promote the study of math, science, language arts, and social studies (the Scholars course of study) immediately before students select high school courses. The Initiative also provides technical assistance to business/education coalitions working to align state policy with the Scholars course of study.

Background

The Initiative is based on work done between employers and educators in communities in Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia dating back to 1988. On August 29, 2002, President George W. Bush and U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige launched the State Scholars Initiative to provide support to states' business and education coalitions committed to improving the academic achievement of high school students.

The Need for Rigorous Coursework

Bureau of Labor Statistics projections show that 80 percent of the top 50 fastest-growing jobs will require education beyond high school and that 40 percent of all new jobs will require at least an associate's degree.¹ Even for those jobs that do not require postsecondary education, employers are seeking employees who are proficient in reading, math, and science, who can solve problems, work in teams, and communicate effectively. Most important, they are looking for employees who can learn new skills throughout their lives. Yet a large percentage of high school students graduate without the solid academic foundation needed to succeed in higher education and the rapidly evolving workplace.

- Only three in ten students complete the minimum courses recommended for college entrance by the National Commission on Excellence in Education.²
- Nearly four in ten students do not perform adequately in core academic subject areas, and certain groups of students – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds – perform most poorly.³
- Nearly one-half of postsecondary students require and take remedial coursework in college. Students who take remedial coursework are far less likely to eventually earn a degree than are other students.⁴

Business leaders concerned about the ability of the U.S. workforce to meet the increasingly technological demands of the workplace have been impressed by research that showed that completion of a rigorous course of study increases students' likelihood of postsecondary persistence and completion. In fact, students who complete a rigorous course of study earn degrees at twice the rate of those who do not.⁵

Scholars Course of Study⁶

The business/education coalition in each state defines a Scholars course of study that includes no less than:

- 4 credits in English
- 3 credits in math (Algebra 1, geometry, Algebra 2)
- 3 credits in basic lab science (biology, chemistry, physics)
- 3.5 credits in social studies (chosen from U.S. and world history, geography, economics, and government)
- 2 credits in the same foreign language

Benefits to Students

The State Scholars Initiative represents an important step to ensure all students' access to a quality education. With information and encouragement from business leaders and community volunteers, middle and high school students are encouraged to choose the Scholars course of study. As a result of graduating as Scholars, students are more likely to be:

- Ready for postsecondary education without the need for remediation;
- Academically prepared for high tech military, job training, and apprenticeship programs;
- Provided with meaningful school and community recognition.

Results

- Business/education coalitions have defined a Scholars course of study and conducted Scholar presentations in more than 500 districts (see participating partnerships below).
- Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of Arkansas graduates completing Algebra 2 rose from 48 percent to 71 percent and those completing chemistry rose from 33 percent to 63 percent.⁷
- The Arkansas State Board of Education earlier increased the minimum course of study up to the original expectations for the Arkansas Scholars Initiative, and the business and education coalition is endorsing another increase in requirements.
- Between 1999 and 2002, the percentage of Texas high school students graduating under a Scholars course of study rose from 15 percent in 1999 to greater than 70 percent in 2003.⁸
- In Texas, the Legislature has made \$324 million in grants available for the 2004-2005 biennium to financially needy Scholars who complete the defined rigorous course of study.

Participating Business and Education Partnerships

The following organizations have established coalitions in partnership with each state's governor and chief state school officer to participate in the State Scholars Initiative:

- Arkansas Business & Education Alliance
- Connecticut Business & Industry Association
- Indiana's Education Roundtable
- Partnership for Kentucky Schools
- Maryland Business Roundtable for Education
- Public Education Forum of Mississippi/Mississippi Economic Council
- Business Coalition for Educational Excellence at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce
- New Mexico Business Roundtable for Educational Excellence
- Oklahoma Business & Education Coalition
- The Education Partnership (Rhode Island)
- Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Texas Business and Education Coalition
- Partnership for Learning (Washington)

Working with the Center for State Scholars, these partnerships will lead state and local efforts to increase the number of students completing the Scholars course of study. The Center for State Scholars, a 501(c)(3) established to provide counsel and service to business/education coalitions on the State Scholars Initiative, is sponsored in part by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, *PR/Award No. V051U020001*.

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2000). *The Outlook for College Graduates, 1998-2008*.

² U.S. Department of Education, NCES. Digest of Education Statistics 2000, Table 141.

³ U.S. Department of Education, NCES NAEP Assessments.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, OERI. 1999.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, OERI. 1999.

⁶ Recommended by the National Commission on Excellence in Education

⁷ Council of Chief State School Officers. 2001. *State Indicators of Science and Mathematics Education*, Pages 32 and 33.

⁸ Texas Education Agency. 2002. *Academic Excellence Indicator System*.