

EDUCATION TO WORKFORCE POLICY INITIATIVE:
SEAMLESS DEVELOPMENT OF THE
MIDWESTERN REGION'S WORKFORCE

News Release

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Midwestern Higher Education Compact and The Council of State Governments Midwestern Office Receive Funding for Education-to-Work Initiative

Minneapolis – Lumina Foundation for Education has awarded \$300,000 to the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference (MLC) and the Midwestern Governors Association (MGA) for a first-of-its-kind regional P-16 education to workforce collaboration.

"The link between our universities and business communities is important to both workforce development and new job creation," said North Dakota Governor John Hoeven, 2004 MGA chair. "This grant will help us to strengthen that link and find new ways to enhance the vitality of our Midwestern economies."

The three-year initiative will convene state legislators, governors, educators and business leaders to explore linking education systems more closely with workforce development efforts to contribute to a successful economy in the Midwest. The goal is to equip states with the tools they need to build a skilled workforce.

"This initiative is unique to the region. It is exciting in its collaboration and will encourage interstate communication with a policy summit, roundtable discussions and a policy report series," said James H. McCormick, MHEC chair and chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. "The initiative's purpose is to facilitate the process of goal setting, both for seamless education transition and workforce development. This will be true for each state given their unique economic, social, political and cultural make-up."

In the longer term, the Foundation project will 1) contribute to the education and workforce development dialogue; 2) advance and build on existing educational systems and to strengthen workforce training in states; and 3) positively impact the lives of the Midwest's citizens and the states' economies.

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"The Midwestern Legislative Conference has long been an active proponent of workforce development strategies that emphasize the important role of education, and we believe this initiative will help to ensure a brighter future for states in the Midwest," explained Ohio Senator Kevin Coughlin, 2005 MLC Chair. "We look forward to collaborating with the region's governors and education leaders as we work to meet the workforce challenges that lie ahead.

States involved in this project are: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The target populations include both traditional-age students preparing for a college education and career and working adults in need of retooling, retraining and further education. Particular emphasis will be placed on enhancing the opportunities for individuals from low-income families and/or ethnic minority backgrounds.

The Midwestern Higher Education Compact, founded in 1991, consists of Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin. MHEC sponsors a variety of programs to reduce costs, to increase student access and to conduct policy research and analysis. The Compact is statutorily created and governed by a board comprising five commissioners from each member state. Commissioners include legislators, governor's representatives and higher education leaders. MHEC is located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and is directed by President Larry Isaak. For more information about the Compact, please visit www.mhec.org or call 612-626-8288.

The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments (CSG) provides staff support to the Midwestern Legislative Conference and the Midwestern Governors Association. CSG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that assists and advances state government by providing research assistance, professional development opportunities, interstate consulting services and suggested state legislation. The national organization is headquartered in Lexington, Ky., and has regional offices in Lombard (Chicago), Ill., Atlanta, New York and Sacramento.

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