

“Making Opportunity Affordable” Talking Points

July 7, 2009

The Challenge and Opportunity Presented by MOA

America faces unprecedented economic decline and insecurity. Unemployment is approaching levels unseen in a quarter century. The world’s credit markets have collapsed. The auto and banking industries are in financial jeopardy. This crisis demands a turnaround plan that boldly marshals American talent.

MOA is an unprecedented effort to increase the number of graduates *within available resources* while preserving instructional quality. Together we can – and we must – ensure these graduates are ready to contribute to the nation’s political and social health and to succeed in a global knowledge economy.

Call to Action

The need for transformational change is obvious to anyone who follows global trends. President Obama has called for a restoration of U.S. leadership in degree attainment. To succeed, we must reverse a trend that has put the nation in a four-way tie for 10th in the percentage of its population between ages 25 and 34 with a college degree. Through MOA, like-minded organizations work within states to recalibrate higher education spending to graduate many more students than the nation is on track to educate.

Policy Pathways

The initiative relies on three mutually reinforcing pathways to provide greater opportunity and mobility for students:

- 1) *Increase and Reward Completion.* States should begin setting aside significant portions of their higher education budgets to reward institutions for students who complete courses and graduate in greater numbers at lower per-unit expense. States also should pay colleges and universities more for serving students who will comprise a growing share of the American labor force, including students of color, first generation students, students from low-income families and working or unemployed adults.
- 2) *Generate and Reinvest Savings.* Spread widely, efficient and cost-effective academic and administrative approaches can free resources for serving many more undergraduates. Fewer wasted credits, better use of tuition policy, campus space, fewer building projects, and outsourcing operations – all of this and more is needed to make the best use of available dollars.
- 3) *Educate and Train in Affordable Ways.* Higher education is a prime candidate for innovation, such as entirely new ways of cost-effectively delivering degree programs. High-quality education could be delivered through in a variety of ways using a variety of channels that would free resources to offer non-traditional students new opportunities. Whether public or private, nonprofit or for-profit, two-or four-year, higher education institutions must become more nimble, efficient and responsive to the needs of students and American society.

MOA - Tennessee

- Tennessee was one of 11 states selected to participate in the “learning year” of MOA, from 37 original applicants. Learning year milestones included:
 - a “policy audit” that uncovered ways in which state- and system-level policies could be better aligned with the degree productivity goals of MOA;
 - development of the Student Flow Model, a data-based tool for: achieving consensus around goals for additional degrees and certificates; plotting a path toward goal attainment; and allocating responsibility among postsecondary sectors for increased degree production; and
 - national “policy academies” involving MOA states and national partner organizations. The MOA-TN state leadership team met in Denver to share ideas with other MOA states and receive instructions for applying for implementation funds.

- Tennessee’s strategies will focus on:
 - improving the link between state higher education goals and the fiscal incentives embedded in higher education funding formulas and the Performance Funding program;
 - improving student retention and college graduation rates;
 - devising a comprehensive strategy for increasing successful postsecondary participation by working-age adults; and
 - improving articulation and applying lessons from the TBR Developmental Studies Redesign project to courses in the general education curriculum.
 - Furthermore, the productivity agenda will be the primary focus of the higher education master plan for 2010-2015.

- MOA is funded by Lumina Foundation for Education and is aided by several partnering organizations, including the National Governors Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, Southern Regional Education Board, and State Higher Education Executive Officers.

- Over the summer:
 - Working groups will convene around topics of the higher education funding formulas, Performance Funding, Academic Policies, and Adult Students;
 - The Education Commission of the States’ National Forum will take place July 8-10 in Nashville, featuring an MOA-TN panel session facilitated by Dennis Jones of NCHEMS;
 - The Tennessee Business Roundtable will convene three regional forums in support of the higher education productivity agenda August 25-27; and
 - Tennessee’s proposal for an MOA Implementation Grant is due September 11. The five MOA states deemed most ready to implement a comprehensive productivity agenda for higher education will receive implementation grants of up to \$2 million. Tennessee intends to be one of those states.