

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The State Scholars Initiative is proud to welcome four new states to the network: Missouri, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming. In the recent RFP process, these four states truly stood out from the rest, thanks to their clear commitment to the Scholars goal of utilizing business leaders to encourage high school students to stretch themselves academically, as well as their detailed plans for making that goal a reality. The addition of these states brings the total number of SSI states up to 24 – meaning that almost half the states in the union are motivating students to become a Scholar today, and a success tomorrow.



Troy Justesen

We convened leaders from the states and our national Advisory Board members in Denver on Dec. 3 – 7 to build on the initiative’s momentum. Troy Justesen, U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, and other staff of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education and WICHE, met with the state directors and the State Scholars Advisory Board during a reception at the Denver Art Museum and a meeting hosted at the Community College of Denver. Assistant Secretary Justesen emphasized the crucial role that SSI has in improving students’ academic proficiencies.

During the week we oriented our four new states, enhanced state directors’ skills and strategies during a



Representatives from our four new states: Meghan Maskery, MO; Robert Kansky, WY; Richard Deaver, SD; and Pat Branscomb, NH.

seminar on program sustainability, and briefed our national Advisory Board members on the achievements and impact of the state programs. We heard many compelling examples of how the initiative is helping students throughout the country to better prepare for life after high school, no matter what path they choose. Students who plan to go on to college will have fulfilled the curricular requirements for the new Academic Competitiveness Grants, which are available to Pell-eligible students who take a rigorous high school curriculum, such as the State Scholars Core Course of Study.

We are proud of the states’ accomplishments and eager to work with them as they encourage even more students to complete the rigorous State Scholars Core Course of Study.



Terese Rainwater

**Student Voices** *Alejandrina Garcia, a psychology major at the University of Utah, attended the Utah Scholars program kick-off in September, where she spoke about the importance of a rigorous curriculum, such as the one she completed at the Academy of Math, Engineering and Science (AMES).*

Before attending the Academy of Math, Engineering and Science (AMES), I would always think to myself, “I can’t wait until I graduate” or “I can’t wait until I don’t have to do any more homework and can sleep in until 12 o’clock every day.” These thoughts slowly turned into, “I can’t believe we only have a year left ... three months left ... a few weeks” and “I’m not finished learning – make the time go slower.” (Don’t get me wrong – there was the occasional “I don’t want to get up, I wish it were over.”) The fact is that AMES provided me with the last few stepping stones of my journey. There no longer was a doubt in my mind that I would pursue a higher education....”

# FOCUS ON

## ★ ARIZONA ACADEMIC SCHOLARS

The Arizona Academic Scholars program ([www.azacademicscholars.org](http://www.azacademicscholars.org)) was launched in 2005 with four pilot districts and four high schools. Today, 91 schools are involved in the program. What's more, every pilot community has increased the percentage of students committing to and completing the Scholars Course of Study. In fact, according to Arizona Business & Education Coalition (ABEC), which administers the program, in the past two years, over 6,000 8th and 9th grade students have seen the SSI presentation, and almost 3,000 high school seniors have been publicly

"At Intel, we strongly believe that education is the key to a knowledge-based economy, innovation, and the future. The State Scholars Initiative is providing the venue for getting critical messages such as this out to tens of thousands of Arizona students, their parents, and teachers."

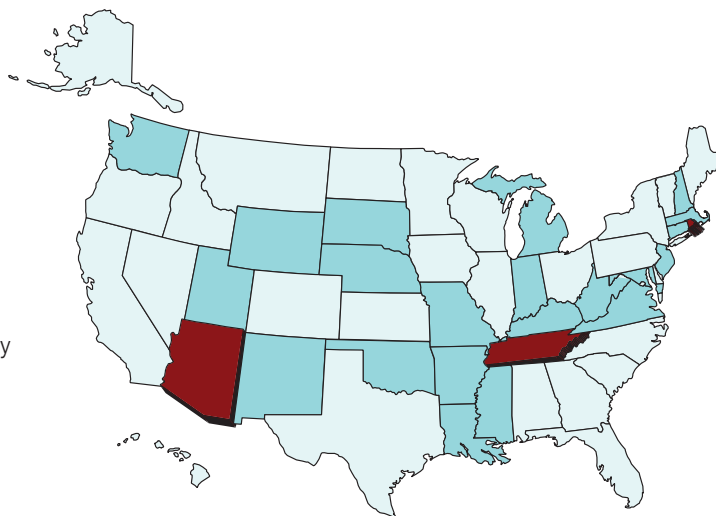
— Shelly Esque  
Director of Public Affairs, Intel

Closer than You Think." ABEC attributes the program's success to two forces: education leaders, who encourage their fellow superintendents to participate in SSI; and business leaders from companies such as Intel, Wells Fargo, IBM, and Medtronic, as well as local chambers of commerce.

ABEC, which kick-started the program with a \$300,000 grant from the Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) is now working to fund the program for the long term. "As we wind down the dependence on the federal grant, there is high interest from various policy groups about how to continue to sustain the Scholars message," says Susan Carlson, ABEC's executive director. "The Arizona Board of Regents has provided a grant to keep the initiative going. The governor's P-20 Council has received a recommendation that the State Board of Education offer the Arizona Academic Scholars course of study statewide, as an interim voluntary step to establishing more rigorous graduation requirements." In addition, a special research project is being developed between the Career and Technical Education Department at the Department of Education and Arizona State University to study many of the issues that have arisen from the Scholars experience. "Even a newly reelected legislator has asked about how to assist," adds Carlson. "These elements are likely to coalesce after the first of the year to give all Arizona the assurance of sustainability."

## ★ RHODE ISLAND SCHOLARS

In Rhode Island, the Education Partnership has been working to encourage students to take a rigorous curriculum in high school for the last three years. With a \$300,000 grant from OVAE, as well as support from its corporate partners (including Cox Communications, Merrill Lynch, Verizon, and many others) and the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, the partnership launched Rhode Island Scholars program ([www.edpartnership.org](http://www.edpartnership.org)) in 2003 in four districts: Portsmouth, West Warwick, Westerly, and Providence. By the next year, over 50



recognized as Scholars in their communities.

Next year, ABEC estimates that over 87,000 high school students will be involved in the initiative, whose theme is "The Future Is

percent of the 8th graders in these districts had committed to becoming Rhode Island Scholars. The state currently has 4,500 Scholars enrolled in the 9th to 11th grade.

Recently, the rest of the state has begun to see the importance of a rigorous curriculum. Rhode Island has adopted new high school graduation requirements for all students graduating in 2008 and beyond. "These new standards are almost identical to our current Rhode Island Scholars requirements," says Valerie Forti, president of the Education Partnership. "In order to align the work of the Education Partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Education and to support the new requirements, we are taking this year to redesign our program. We believe that we will focus more on high-need high schools in high-poverty districts." The partnership is working with over 60 businesses in the state, and many of them will assist with the redesign.

## ★ TENNESSEE SCHOLARS

The Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry, funded by a \$300,000 grant from OVAE, piloted the Tennessee Scholars initiative ([www.tennesseescholars.org](http://www.tennesseescholars.org)) in 2003 in schools in just two counties: Sumner and Knox. The program has come a long way since then. Today, there are Tennessee Scholars programs in 43 counties and more than five dozen schools all over the state.

More than 700 local businesses are partnering with SSI, as are organizations such as the P-16 Council, Tennessee Science Teachers Association, and the American Chemical Society. Businesses and universities are sending employees into the classroom to teach one or more classes of chemistry, physics, or math to help with the increasing numbers of students.

Scholars will definitely benefit from their association with the program. Numerous businesses now offer preferential job hiring for Tennessee Scholars, and nine colleges, universities, and technology centers (including Tennessee Wesleyan, Cleveland State, Tusculum College, and Walters State) offer them scholarships.

Most importantly, the Tennessee Scholars program is now being used as a model for the new high school reform path for graduation that's in the works (to be introduced for adoption in 2007). In addition, the Tennessee Lottery has now appropriated money for teachers to go back to school to get advanced degrees in math and science.

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## SSI Kicks Off in Utah and Virginia

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This fall saw the launch of two new State Scholars programs, one in Utah and one in Virginia. On September 7, Utah Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., participated in the kick-off of the Utah Scholars program ([www.utahscholars.org](http://www.utahscholars.org)). "We must encourage our young people to become lifelong learners at this critical time in their lives," Huntsman said. "In today's modern world, students must be highly skilled in mathematics, science, English, cultural affairs, and foreign language in order to be competitive with their international peers in a global, knowledge-based marketplace." The Governor's Office partnered with the Utah System of Higher Education, the Utah State Office of Education, the Utah K-16 Alliance, and several school districts to make Utah Scholars a reality. Fourteen schools in four districts – Granite, Jordan, Park City, and Provo City – are participating in the Utah Scholars program. Another district, Davis, is also planning to join. Presentations will begin in January and February.

The Utah Scholars program has adapted the SSI Core Course of Study, adding an additional year of math to the curriculum. The reason, according to Utah Commissioner of Higher Education Richard Kendall: "Data show that students who take a more rigorous core curriculum in high school are more likely to go to college, do well in their classes, and graduate sooner. The best indicator is math – students who take math their senior year dramatically increase their ability to succeed in higher education and in the workforce."

"We must encourage our young people to become lifelong learners at this critical time in their lives. In today's modern world, students must be highly skilled in mathematics, science, English, cultural affairs, and foreign language in order to be competitive with their international peers in a global, knowledge-based marketplace."

– Utah Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.

In Virginia, Governor Timothy M. Kaine launched the Commonwealth

"The Virginia Career Education Foundation (VCEF), working with regional business partners, is leading the effort to continue to challenge Virginia's students to excel through programs like Commonwealth Scholars, which will assist our state in maintaining its competitive edge in the global economy."

– Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine

Scholars Program (<http://vcef.net>) on September 29. Commonwealth Scholars is overseen by the Virginia Career Education Foundation (VCEF), a statewide business/education partnership. Eleven Virginia school divisions will participate in the program: Albemarle County, Alexandria, Bristol, Carroll County, Chesterfield County, Henry County, Lancaster County, Nottoway County, Richmond, Roanoke County, and Scott County. The program has added two years of health and physical education to the SSI Core Course of Study.

"Virginia students over the past year have posted the largest increases in mathematical achievement in the nation on the SAT I exam, and 10 of our schools were ranked among the nation's 100 best," said Governor Kaine. "The foundation, working with regional business partners, is leading the effort to continue to challenge Virginia's students to excel through programs like Commonwealth Scholars, which will assist our state in maintaining its competitive edge in the global economy."

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## Policy Update: Global Competitiveness

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The global economy has had a major impact on U.S. businesses, from manufacturers to service providers in virtually every industry. The evolution of a truly global market for goods and services has been a boon for American business, but it has presented a challenge, as well: today, U.S. firms compete with more companies from more countries than at any time in history. Whether the commodity is computer chips or logistics services, it's a buyers' market – and the competition is fierce. But we're not just competing against other countries: thanks to the rise of the multinational enterprise – which spreads its activities around the globe, in its search for the best value and greatest expertise – we're also competing against ourselves. The question on many minds – in business, government, and education – is: are we up to the challenge?

The new *Competitiveness Index: Where America Stands* – a report from the Council on Competitiveness, a U.S. policy-action group whose members include leaders from business, education, and labor – examines that very question. The report looks at American competitiveness in the last past 20 years and offers recommendations for the next 20.

The last two decades have seen a shift from place-bound economies with relatively fixed metrics to a rapidly growing, quickly changing global economy that embraces emerging

markets in developing nations. According to the report, "Billions of people in emerging economies have entered the global trading system, opening consumer markets and labor pools of unprecedented size." While industrialized nations are "projected to see their populations shrink," most emerging economies "are projected to grow rapidly."

But developing nations aren't simply markets. They're major product and service providers, as well – increasingly sophisticated ones. In fact, developing nations such as China and India yield a growing number of globe's young professionals each year. In 2003, for instance, China produced over twice as many engineers as did the U.S., while India produced 40 percent more accounting and finance specialists.

The past 20 years have also seen a rapid rise in the importance of "insight, imagination and ingenuity" as competitive values, according to the *Competitiveness Index*. Traditionally, the American economy optimizes innovation and entrepreneurship. But thanks to improved science and technology education, other countries are catching up. While the United States still leads the world in science and technology, the "lead is narrowing and will continue to narrow as other countries increase their investments in research and education," according to the report.

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# Global Competitiveness

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What does the United States need to do to maintain its competitiveness and prosperity in the next 20 years? The *Competitiveness Index* puts it plainly: "In an economy where technical change is one of the major drivers of growth, and where lower-wage workers in emerging markets are increasingly able to compete directly for work that once could be done only in America, the demand for more skills – higher educational attainment and higher-order competencies in communication and expert thinking – has risen rapidly." However, the report concludes, "Despite decades of focus on this issue and progress in some areas, the U.S. educational system still fails to meet the needs of a globally competitive economy on many levels."

To maintain its lead, the U.S. must not simply invest in education but invest in a way that targets our shortfalls. Recent studies indicate that only about half of all 2005 high school graduates have the reading skills necessary to succeed in college. This trend continues in college – where students are found to lack the "skills necessary to perform complex and challenging literacy activities" – and beyond.

There are problems in other areas as well. The World Economic forum's *Global Competitiveness Report* for 2006-07 found that the quality of American math and science education was cited as one of the biggest problems in doing business in the U.S. In addition, academic performance gaps continue to persist between racial and ethnic groups; that's especially troubling, from both a social and economic viewpoint, because projections indicate that by 2020 the share of minorities in the workforce will double, to 37 percent. "If the performance gap between Hispanics, African-Americans and Whites persists, the number of Americans aged 26-64 who do not have a high school degree could soar," according to the Council on Competitiveness report.

These deficits, if we don't address them, will have major implications for our economy: our students – our future employees – must be able to think critically and analytically if the U.S. is to maintain its lead in the increasingly competitive global economy. If we fail to educate our students well, the *Competitiveness Index* projects, "the United States will almost inevitably be a smaller part of a growing world economy."

"My brother and I were the first people in our family to go to college – and it was one of the best decisions we ever made. A rigorous education, like the State Scholars Course of Study, changes your life – I know that first hand. It absolutely helps you to succeed at whatever you decide to do, whether you pursue college or go straight to work. And it helps you make the world a better place. One person can make a difference – it's possible."

– U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education Troy Justesen, who grew up in the coal-mining town of Orangeville, Utah, and earned his A.S. at the College of Eastern Utah, his bachelor's at Utah State, and his doctorate from Vanderbilt

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## STATE SCHOLARS: PARTICIPATING STATES AND CONTACTS

- ★ **ARIZONA**  
[www.azacademicscholars.org](http://www.azacademicscholars.org)
- ★ **ARKANSAS**  
[www.arkansascholars.org](http://www.arkansascholars.org)
- ★ **CONNECTICUT**  
[www.ctscholars.org/intro.htm](http://www.ctscholars.org/intro.htm)
- ★ **INDIANA**  
[www.indianacore40scholars.org](http://www.indianacore40scholars.org)
- ★ **KENTUCKY**  
[www.kyscholars.com](http://www.kyscholars.com)
- ★ **LOUISIANA**  
<http://wiche.edu/statescholars/states/brief.asp?id=7>
- ★ **MARYLAND**  
[www.mbrt.org/scholars/index.htm](http://www.mbrt.org/scholars/index.htm)
- ★ **MASSACHUSETTS**  
[www.mbae.org](http://www.mbae.org)
- ★ **MICHIGAN**  
<http://michiganscholars.org/index.htm>
- ★ **MISSISSIPPI**  
[www.mississippischolars.org/mx/hm.asp?id=home](http://www.mississippischolars.org/mx/hm.asp?id=home)
- ★ **MISSOURI**  
[www.wiche.edu/statescholars](http://www.wiche.edu/statescholars)
- ★ **NEBRASKA**  
[www.futureforcenebraska.org](http://www.futureforcenebraska.org)
- ★ **NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
[www.wiche.edu/statescholars](http://www.wiche.edu/statescholars)
- ★ **NEW JERSEY**  
[www.wiche.edu/statescholars](http://www.wiche.edu/statescholars)
- ★ **NEW MEXICO**  
<http://nmscholars.org>
- ★ **OKLAHOMA**  
[www.obecinfo.com/oklahoma\\_scholars.html](http://www.obecinfo.com/oklahoma_scholars.html)
- ★ **RHODE ISLAND**  
[www.edpartnership.org/?id=1074](http://www.edpartnership.org/?id=1074)
- ★ **SOUTH DAKOTA**  
[www.wiche.edu/statescholars](http://www.wiche.edu/statescholars)
- ★ **TENNESSEE**  
[www.tennesseescholars.org](http://www.tennesseescholars.org)
- ★ **UTAH**  
[www.utahsbr.edu](http://www.utahsbr.edu)
- ★ **VIRGINIA**  
[www.vacareereducationfoundation.org](http://www.vacareereducationfoundation.org)
- ★ **WASHINGTON**  
[www.partnership4learning.org](http://www.partnership4learning.org)
- ★ **WEST VIRGINIA**  
[www.educationalalliance.org](http://www.educationalalliance.org)
- ★ **WYOMING**  
[www.wiche.edu/statescholars](http://www.wiche.edu/statescholars)