

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year, more students and communities than ever will benefit from the State Scholars Initiative (SSI), a national program that utilizes business leaders to motivate students to complete a rigorous course of study in high school, one that will give them a boost in college and their careers. In April, we added a number of states from all areas of the country to the SSI network; and to make it a true network, we brought all our members together in Boulder, CO, where they shared information and discussed issues and strategies.



Terese Rainwater

This month, we're hosting a second grant competition for states to join SSI. Be sure to check our Web site (www.wiche.edu/statescholars) for the latest information.

Another way students – and their families – will benefit relates to the new federal Academic Competitiveness Grants, which went into effect this summer (see article at right). With these grants, students who complete the State Scholars course of study not only increase their ability to pay for postsecondary education, they also increase their likelihood of academic success. The emphasis on a rigorous high school curriculum ensures that students are college-ready, and the additional grants to Pell-eligible students ensure affordability for those who need it most.

Policy Update: SSI & Academic Competitiveness Grants

Last February two new student grant programs designed to address the increasing need for improved math and science instruction were signed into law by President Bush: Academic Competitiveness (AC) Grants and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grants. The grant programs – which were created by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 – are funded at \$790 million for the 2006-07 academic year and \$4.5 billion over five years. Almost 2 million students are eligible for the grants, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Grants are available to Pell Grant-eligible students who are U.S. citizens studying full-time in two- or four-year degree programs. Additionally, and of especial importance for SSI states, students must meet certain academic standards both in high school and college.

AC Grants are for first- and second-year college students,

and they are of particular interest to those of us who are involved in the State Scholars program. These grants – up to \$750 for the first year of college and up to \$1,300 for the second year of college – are awarded to college students who have successfully completed a rigorous secondary school program and who maintain a 3.0 GPA in college. SMART Grants, which run up to \$4,000, provide assistance to upper-division college students who are majoring in math, science, or one of several other areas while maintaining a GPA of at least 3.0.

What, exactly, is meant by “rigorous”? According to the U.S. Department of Education, students have satisfied the rigor requirement if they have completed the State Scholars core curriculum; students who have earned a state-recognized honors or “college prep” high school diploma or who have taken and passed at least two

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★ OKLAHOMA

In May 2005, Oklahoma graduated its first State Scholars: 14 students from Ardmore City Schools were presented with medallions by local business leaders during their commencement ceremony and treated to a day at Six Flags over Texas (the Class of 2006 graduated 39 Scholars). Another 13 Scholars graduating from Durant public schools received SSI medallions, as well.

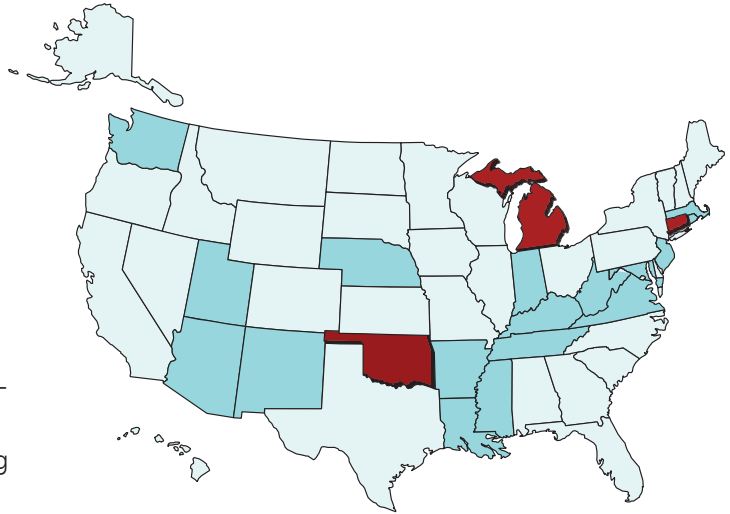
Oklahoma was one of the first six states to implement SSI. The program was launched in 2003 under the management of the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition with two years of seed funding from the Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, or OVAE (now business entities will support the program for statewide delivery). It has been implemented in 10 school districts – Ardmore, Durant, Sand Springs, Tulsa, Norman, McAlester, Sperry, Elmore City, Bixby, and Ponca City – and reached some 15,000 Oklahoma students.

Oklahoma Scholars has also tapped into the tribal community. The Five Civilized Tribes and the Inter-Tribal Council of the Eight Northeastern Tribes have given their support through formal resolutions signed by their chiefs.

Oklahoma has seen an increasing push for rigor recently. In May 2005, the legislature passed SB 982, requiring a college-preparatory curriculum similar to the Oklahoma Scholars course of study.

"This is a win-win program," says the Oklahoma Scholars program director, Terri Nicoll. "Students respond to successful business leaders in a classroom. Business volunteers realize teaching is much harder than they perceived, so they have a renewed respect for educators. And teachers appreciate the motivation that community leaders bring to students."

For more information, visit www.obecinfo.com/oklahoma_scholars.html or contact Terri Nicoll, project director, at (405) 270-4498 or tnicoll@earthlink.net.



★ CONNECTICUT

In 2003, the Education Foundation of the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA) received a \$300,000 grant from OVAE to launch the Connecticut State Scholars (CSS) program. Since then, CSS has worked with two school districts and the technical high school system on three different pilots, all of which have seen considerable success.

In New Haven, the CSS summer math and science academy is in its third year. Jointly funded by the business community, the Department of Higher Education, and the New Haven Public Schools, the academy works with CSS students who have low 8th grade Connecticut mastery test scores to ensure they will be able to pass the more rigorous math and science classes required by CSS.

In Danbury, Boehringer-Ingelheim and G.E. funded a math lab, which has had over 2,000 student visits, enabling more students to take and pass higher-level math classes and necessitating the school system to hire an additional math teacher for next year.

In Middletown, at Vinal Technical High School, the summer Techno Camp for middle school students added a manufacturing technology teacher, and the class became one of the most popular in the camp, encouraging some students to choose to attend Vinal in the fall.

Building on the successes of Connecticut State Scholars, CBIA applied to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for an Advanced Technological Education grant. The purpose of the grant, titled "Pipeline from Technical High Schools to the College of Technology," is to ensure that

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Connecticut State Scholars is a major strategy in CBIA's work with community colleges. In partnership with the NSF-funded Regional Center for Next Generation Manufacturing under the College of Technology, the grant will allow CBIA to work with six technical high schools and six community colleges to prepare students for careers in advanced manufacturing. For more information, visit www.ctscholars.org or contact Dayl Walker at Walkerd@cbia.com or (860) 675-7775.

★ MICHIGAN

The Michigan Scholars program was launched in 2004-05 in three districts: Lansing, Howell, and Saginaw. It is supported by a grant from OVAE, as well as by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, the Saginaw County Business & Education Partnership, the Howell Area Chamber of Commerce, and over two dozen companies, from small, local businesses to multinationals with operations in the state.

Michigan Scholars was the forerunner of a statewide move toward greater rigor in high school: in April, Governor Jennifer Granholm signed new graduation requirements into law. All students, starting with the Class of 2011, must complete a rigorous curriculum that's very similar to SSI's, including four credits in math, four in language arts, three in science, three in social studies, one in P.E. and one in the arts, as well as an online course or learning experience; beginning with the Class of 2016, students will be required to complete two credits of a world language. The goal is to make sure that Michigan students graduate with the skills they will need to compete in the workforce.

The first Michigan Scholars graduated last year: read about the experience of two of them in the "Student Voices" text boxes in this newsletter. For more information, visit www.michiganscholars.org or contact Leslie Knopp at lkknopp@chartermi.net or (231) 947-9457.

Recent Events: Massachusetts Kick-off

In July, high school principals from across the state were introduced to the new Massachusetts State Scholars Initiative at their annual conference. Students at five Massachusetts high schools – Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School, Burlington High School, Chicopee High School, Chicopee



Massachusetts Scholars pilot-school principals: David Elworthy, Worcester North High School; Linda Hayes, Burlington High School; Mary Jo Nawrocki, Assabet Valley RTHS; and Roland Joyal, Chicopee High School

Comprehensive High School, and Worcester North High School – will have the opportunity to qualify as Massachusetts State Scholars by taking a rigorous academic program to prepare them for college and careers. Business and community leaders will work with 8th and 9th graders as they consider what courses they will take in high school, helping them to understand the changing world of work and tougher postsecondary education environments.

"Students need to know that the choices they make in high school can have a dramatic impact on their future," said Linda M. Noonan, managing director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, which oversees the program along with the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association and the Department of Education. "Getting that message straight from the business community makes it much more relevant for students and their families."

"This initiative supports the important education reform work already underway in Massachusetts," said Education Commissioner David P. Driscoll. "It is critical that our students strive to achieve at higher levels in high school so they will graduate better prepared to succeed in college or career."

Student Voices

"I have learned that scholarship is a virtue, and a journey never truly ending.... I have learned that there is much to be gained from diversifying the mind. Do not allow the fact that you have never done something before to prevent you from ever doing it. There was once a time when Beethoven had never played the piano, when Langston Hughes had never written, and when Ben Wallace had never held a basketball." — *Richie Halas, Michigan Scholar, student at Northern Michigan University and president of the Wildcats Wrestling Club*



Student Voices

"By completing the requirements for becoming a Michigan Scholar, not only do you know you can handle what comes with college, but you've also got just enough extra knowledge to better understand what is going on in your classes and what is expected of you." — *Lindsay Cain, a 2005 Michigan Scholar from Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy and a biology major at Alma College in Michigan*

SSI & AC Grants

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Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses have also satisfied the requirement. In addition, states may submit, by November 1 of this year at the latest, additional rigorous secondary school programs of study to the Secretary of Education for recognition.

For State Scholars, AC Grants serve to underline the SSI message: that a challenging curriculum helps you do better in school and life. For students, they're a real incentive to do well in high school and college – and they help students better afford a higher education as well.

Preparedness and affordability – both are critical. "Some in the higher education community have been concerned that these new grants might reduce access because students who don't take a rigorous curriculum tend to come from more economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. But this thinking is wrong on two counts," says David Longanecker, executive director of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, which manages SSI. "First, the evidence is clear that students who don't take a rigorous curriculum in high school don't succeed in college – so sending them on without adequate preparation is only providing them with a false promise. Second, this initiative takes nothing away from students but provides a substantive increase in aid for those who accept the challenge. Higher education ought to endorse good ideas like this one, instead of continually raising questions."

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SSI is administered by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), based in Boulder, CO, and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998. Currently funded at \$6.1 million, SSI is also supported with an in-kind contribution from WICHE. The work reported herein was supported under State Scholars Initiative, PR/Award Number (V051U050006), as administered by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education or the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

STATE SCHOLARS: PARTICIPATING STATES AND CONTACTS

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