



NEWSLETTER

September 2009

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Terese Rainwater

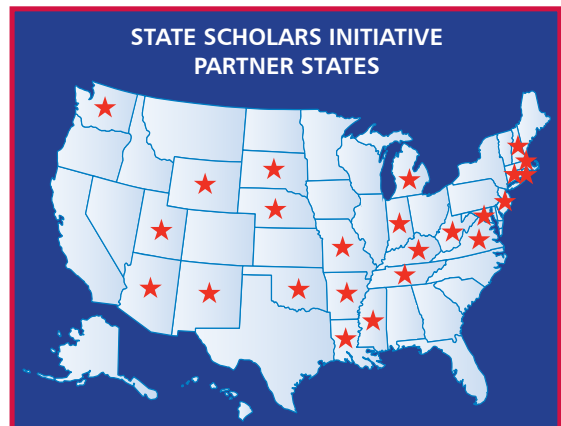
In the last four years, the State Scholars Initiative (SSI) has made impressive strides. We've grown the program to 24 states, with partnerships in every region in the country. We've increased the number of SSI school districts to 949. Today, some 600 companies nationwide are sending volunteers into participating schools, selling students on the value of a rigorous curriculum. And the ranks of SSI students have swelled into the thousands with more graduating as Scholars every year.

As importantly, SSI has made a diligent effort to collect data showing the program really works. Data harvested from 2006 through 2008 representing over 1.4 million course enrollments in 10 states show that the majority of SSI students are successful in their courses – including the most rigorous ones. Lastly, through the National Summit on Rigor and Relevance that SSI hosted last year, we've been able to carry our message about the importance of a rigorous curriculum and the value of using business volunteers to deliver that message to students to a broad audience of influential decision makers.

As the national program winds down, we want to thank everyone who has participated – those who work for state partnerships, our business volunteers, students and parents, teachers and counselors, data analysts and policy leaders. In this final newsletter, we review the 2008-09 accomplishments of the 18 states currently participating in the program. In addition, we take this opportunity to highlight the efforts of some of the individuals and companies who've made SSI a success.

THE SSI CORE COURSE OF STUDY

Courses	Years in High School
<i>English</i> English I, English II, English III, English IV	4
<i>Math</i> Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II	3
<i>Science</i> Biology, Chemistry, Physics	3
<i>Social Studies</i> Chosen from U.S. History World History World Geography Economics Government	3.5
<i>Languages</i> Language other than English	2



★ ARIZONA

The 2008-2009 year continued the successful expansion of the Arizona Academic Scholars Initiative, which added three districts, bringing the statewide total to 19 districts. Thirty-one percent of the 2009 graduates in these districts were distinguished as Scholars; and almost 27,000 8th and 9th grade students participated in Scholars presentations.

One person who exemplifies the business-education connection that makes SSI a success is Richard Meyer. Meyer has worked as a career and technical education teacher in a rural area of the Payson Unified School District – and more recently, in the private sector. Following his retirement and with his superintendent’s blessing, he served as the Scholars coordinator for his old school district, Payson. He’s now serving on the school board, where he plans to continue his efforts to encourage academic rigor in Payson’s schools.



Payson's Richard Meyer

★ ARKANSAS

People magazine featured three Arkansas Scholars from El Dorado in the June 1 issue: Ramona Martin, Michaela McVoy, and Trey O’Shea each overcame significant economic disadvantages and family challenges to graduate with top grade point averages. All three students will attend college this fall with support from the El Dorado-based Murphy Oil Company, which has made a remarkable commitment: to pay for the college tuition of every student living in the El Dorado school district who attends college in the next 20 years. Former CEO Claiborne Deming, who conceived of the scholarship program, was the keynote speaker at the first “Heroes in Education” awards ceremony hosted by the Arkansas Business and Education Alliance. The alliance, which recognizes high school graduates across the state through the Arkansas Scholars program, convened the luncheon to honor education leaders and policymakers who’d made a significant impact on education in Arkansas.



Arkansas heroes in education: Representatives of the El Dorado News-Times, Joan Hershberger, front left, Newspaper in Education coordinator; General Manager Betty Chatham, front right; Managing Editor Shea Wilson, back center; and Janice McIntyre, city editor, are recognized as Friends of Education. Former state legislator Jodie Mahony, D-El Dorado, back left, was recognized as a Policy Leader in Education.

Photo credit: Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

★ KENTUCKY

Officially launched in January of 2004, the Kentucky Scholars Initiative (KYSI) continues to have an impact in both established school districts and those that have recently joined. Kenton County in northern Kentucky was the first community to implement KYSI. Kenton Superintendent Tim Hanner maintains that the conversations around KYSI are what drove his district to evaluate the road to high school graduation. Other districts had their first class of Kentucky Scholars graduate in May 2009; in Carroll County the graduating Scholars were recognized in a special ceremony.

Columbia Gas of Kentucky has contributed \$20,000 to establish an Achievement Award fund. The fund,



Kentucky Scholars of Carroll County

designed to provide a student of need with support for college, will be used to entice other Kentucky corporations to support the Kentucky Scholars mission.

Kentucky received \$14 million from the National Math and Science Foundation, which utilized the state's experience through the Kentucky Scholars Initiative to help earmark it as a state ready to engage students in rigorous course work. In addition, early conversations around Kentucky Scholars provided one of the catalysts that helped motivate the Kentucky Department of Education to raise its minimum graduation requirements. Beginning in 2012, all students will be required to complete a college-ready curriculum that includes many of the same courses found in the State Scholars Initiative.

★ LOUISIANA

Louisiana State Scholars Initiative marked the end of the 2008-09 school year with two major events, one looking back and one looking forward. Graduating seniors who completed the State Scholars Core Curriculum were honored at a senior awards dinner in April, where their hard work and perseverance were recognized. Local dignitaries – including mayors and other civic leaders, district superintendents and school board members, local university officials, and members of local chambers of commerce – also attended, paying tribute to the accomplishments of the newest Louisiana Scholars graduates, as well as to their families for their support in helping their children achieve their goals.

In mid-June Louisiana Scholars sponsored College Camp Day for Ouachita, Rapides, and West Feliciana Parish 8th and 9th graders. Students were bused from their schools to a local university for a day of presentations and activities reinforcing the Scholars message, including a tour and scavenger hunt to familiarize them with a college environment. Presenters, including employees from the Louisiana Department of Education and the university, provided students with information on topics ranging from how to get into and pay for college to how to be successful once in college.

★ MARYLAND

The Maryland Business Roundtable for Education (MBRT) leads the Maryland Scholars initiative in partnership with the governor and the state superintendent of schools. MBRT funded a statewide expansion of the initiative after the original SSI grant was exhausted in 2005, and today the program reaches 23 of the state's 24 school districts. More than 5,000 volunteers have participated, reaching 83,000 Maryland 8th and 9th graders in over 200 schools each year. This past June alone, 2,127 Frederick County graduates – 71 percent of Frederick's senior class – received a Maryland Scholars certificate at commencement exercises for having completed the Scholars Core.

To sustain the dialogue with teens and provide them with information about careers, colleges, and what they need to do to prepare themselves, MBRT produces a magazine and an interactive Website (www.BeWhatIWantToBe.com), funded by several companies and organizations.

MBRT has over four years of course completion data from its two pilot districts – in Frederick and Harford counties – which show significant increases in the completion of rigorous coursework, particularly among low-income and minority students. In Frederick County, for instance, 2,523 more students completed algebra 2 in 2007 than in 2003 (115 percent increase), including 404 more low-income students (348 percent increase). In addition, 817 more graduates met Maryland Scholars criteria (52 percent increase), including 145 more low-income grads (330 percent increase). In Harford County over the same time period, 1,135 more graduates met Maryland Scholars criteria (122 percent increase), including 145 more low-income grads (659 percent increase). Maryland Scholars also has data from 18 other districts, which along with the pilot data, represent 162,000 students and 84 percent of Maryland's school districts.

★ MASSACHUSETTS

One of Massachusetts's success stories this year was Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School, which made a big effort to publicize Massachusetts

Scholars, including painting the Scholars logo at the school entrance for every student to see and talking the program up in school publications. Assabet has held special programs for Scholars students to keep them motivated and on track. That support is especially important here: due to the school's tight schedule, Assabet students sometimes have to forgo other electives to meet SSI's language requirement; in addition, they must maintain a 3.0 GPA, like all Massachusetts Scholars.



Massachusetts Scholars of Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School

This year, 45 Assabet seniors graduated wearing a Scholars medal on their gowns (they also received a special plaque and a Staples gift card). And there are lots more students coming up behind them: some 150 to 200 returning sophomores, juniors, and seniors are committed to doing what it takes to be Scholars. Assabet continued its partnerships and articulation agreements with 11 two-year and four four-year colleges. Students get college credit for courses like health technologies as well as drafting and design technologies. Assabet also staged a conference in January just for Scholars, with sessions on resume writing and interviewing, as well as talks by business volunteers on a variety of career tracks.

★ MISSISSIPPI

Since its inception in 2003, the Mississippi Scholars program has grown from two pilot school districts with two high schools and 24 graduates to 64 school districts with 100-plus high schools and 11,000-plus graduates. This May over 3,000 students met the challenge and graduated as



Mississippi Scholars of Sattillo High School

Mississippi Scholars. "Participating in the Mississippi Scholars program has been a true value to our community and state. Each year we see more and more students challenging themselves and graduating as Mississippi Scholars. I wanted to be an integral part of the Community Development Foundation's efforts and continue to promote graduation throughout our state," said Wayne Averett, Vice President of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development at the Renasant Center for IDEAs which nurtures the growth of new businesses in Tupelo, Mississippi.

Several districts have had particularly strong success this year. Brookhaven-Lincoln County, which launched its program in 2006 with just 26 students and \$8,000 in scholarships, honored 202 seniors as Mississippi Scholars at a gala banquet hosted by Easthaven Baptist Church in April. Sixty students were awarded a total of \$92,500 in scholarships, funded by colleges, universities, local businesses, and individuals. Every student was individually recognized on stage and presented with a medallion and certificate as their picture



Mississippi Scholars of Moorville High School



Mississippi Scholars of Brookhaven Lincoln County

was shown on video screens. Almost 500 people attended the banquet, making it the largest ever held in Lincoln County.

For the fourth year in a row, Lee County high schools – Saultillo, Mooreville, and Shannon – participated in the program, with a combined total of 70 seniors graduating as Scholars. Students received gift cards in recognition of their outstanding efforts. And earlier this year a new high school – Pass Christian – located in the Pass Christian School District, which was devastated by Hurricane Katrina four years ago – joined the Scholars program, sending members of the business community to talk to students about the importance of taking challenging courses.



Business Presenters for Pass Christian School District

★ MISSOURI

Show-Me Scholars, part of the Missouri Chamber Education Foundation, has helped form a collaborative effort between local chambers of commerce and school districts to carry a positive

message about the importance of taking a rigorous course of study. Two individuals have been instrumental in the initiative's success in Kansas City and Cape Girardeau. Vickie Wolgast, executive director of the South Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, helped plan two very successful kick-off events on the western side of the state. She also organizes volunteer training events, distributes volunteer presentation packets, attends school administrative team meetings, and encourages businesses to offer incentives to Show-Me Scholars participants.



*South Kansas City's
Vickie Wolgast*

In southeastern Missouri's Cape Girardeau, Tim Arbeiter, vice president for community development at the Cape Girardeau Area Chamber of Commerce has spent countless hours organizing a Cape Girardeau district Scholars steering committee, presenting to boards of education, and arranging training opportunities. Arbeiter's major contribution is his ability to bring together volunteer presenters who represent interesting and rewarding careers in the Cape Girardeau community. Thanks to him, 8th graders heard the Scholars message from doctors, lawyers, plant managers, car salespeople, law enforcement professionals, teachers, accountants, and bank managers this past spring.



*Cape Girardeau's
Tim Arbeiter*

★ NEW HAMPSHIRE

A new advisory board of business, higher education, policymakers, and K-12 leaders has been created to support the work of New Hampshire Scholars, a collaborative project of the New Hampshire College & University Council, community partners, and the New Hampshire Department of Education. Members of the advisory board will endorse the initiative as an important aspect of a student's academic development. In an effort to achieve statewide sustainability, members



New Hampshire Scholars of Winnisquam Regional High School Scholars

encourage colleagues and other constituents to get involved and welcome other school districts to join the network. The goal of the New Hampshire Scholars program is for every school district in the state to participate. The short-term objective is to expand to 40 school districts by the end of 2010.

Another form of partnership has developed at the local school level. More than 125 volunteers, called the NH Scholars Champions, are now partnering with the 16 active New Hampshire Scholar school districts. At Winnisquam Regional, one of the original pilot schools, active since 2007, champions lead fundraising and sponsorship efforts to ensure that all students graduating as New Hampshire Scholars receive an award. This year all 20 Winnisquam Scholars were presented book awards ranging from \$500 to \$1,000, Dell laptops, or two free courses at the Community College System of New Hampshire.

Lastly, to show families that the initiative is indeed aligned with the higher education community, New Hampshire Scholars invited college admission

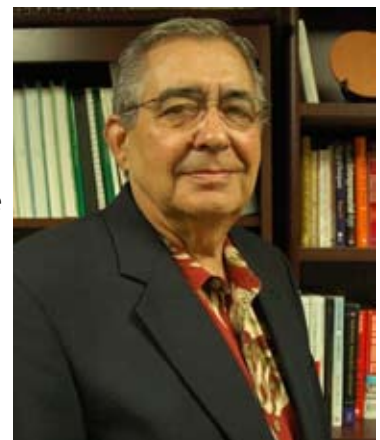
counselors to student recognition and award ceremonies this past June. College representatives personally congratulated the graduating New Hampshire Scholars and presented them with gold medallions. This year 443 seniors at 12 school districts were recognized as Scholars.

★ OKLAHOMA

While all participating schools have made progress in reaching Oklahoma Scholars objectives, three examples stand out. Ardmore City Schools Superintendent Ruth Ann Carr promotes the program aggressively. During the program's first year in her district, Carr solicited incentives – ranging from cash awards to in-kind donations – from various businesses, held a physics fair at lunch hour to build student interest in advanced science courses, and arranged a special on-field presentation at a Friday night football game to introduce the Scholars program. McAlester Public Schools, which joined the program three years ago, has been lucky to have Assistant Superintendent Mary Shannon as a champion. In 2008, 33 percent of its students graduated as Scholars.

This year Oklahoma Scholars partnered with the Cherokee Nation to implement Cherokee Scholars, designed to increase the percentage of Cherokee high school graduates prepared to enter college by encouraging them to take more demanding classes. "This partnership is an important extension of Oklahoma Scholars, as the Cherokee Nation will help deliver the program in the rural areas," says Terri Nicoll, state director of Oklahoma Scholars. "Their focus is to reach Cherokee Nation students

specifically, but the fall-out effect will benefit all students." Qualifying Cherokee students residing in Oklahoma will receive the honor of being named a Cherokee Scholar along with the title of Oklahoma Scholar, and some may qualify for additional scholarship



Neil Morton of Cherokee Nation Education Services, Oklahoma

funds. "The educational opportunities provided by Oklahoma Scholars will add a much needed dimension to the Cherokee Nation Educational Services program," says Neil Morton, Cherokee Nation Education Services group leader. "We are excited to be a part of this proven, result-oriented program."

★ TENNESSEE

Tennessee Scholars recognizes the significant impact that a single individual can have on



James G. Neeley, commissioner, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development

programmatic success. James G. Neeley, Tennessee's commissioner of labor and workforce development, exemplifies such an individual. Along with the governor, the state's Department of Labor and Workforce Development was an early Scholars supporter, and it continues to be one. In fact, the department recently provided Scholars with \$50,000 in funding. In addition, Neeley has served as a highly active advocate

for the program. As he travels throughout the state, visiting career centers and workplaces, he encourages businesspeople, parents, and students to get involved with the Scholars program, emphasizing the importance of education to building a strong workforce. "Tennessee Scholars is an outstanding example of programs that support Governor Bredesen's commitment to higher standards and greater accountability for education in Tennessee," says Neeley. "The principles of Tennessee Scholars emphasize community service as well as high academics. I strongly support the goals of Tennessee Scholars, which dovetail with the strategies essential to bringing about a skilled and educated Workforce and ensuring future prosperity for Tennessee. We are proud to be a sponsor of this program."

★ UTAH

This year the Utah Scholars Initiative recognized both an outstanding business partner and an outstanding volunteer, each exemplifying the type of leadership that is crucial to program success.



Utah Scholars' Andrea Cox (far left) and Carrie F. Beckman (far right) with Cyprus Credit Union's Karen Seo, and Steve Fifield

Cyprus Credit Union, the Outstanding Business Partner of the year, has been part of Utah Scholars since the initiative's inception. This year the company's employees participated in outreach efforts at seven partner schools in multiple districts and gave more than 35 presentations. The Outstanding Volunteer for 2008-09, Jeffery Scott Bates, who works with the University of Utah Engineering Department as the academic program coordinator, has provided student Scholars with a first-hand account of the skills they'll need to succeed in college. "As I reviewed the recommended coursework for entry into the engineering programs we offer, I realized that they aligned very nicely with the Utah Scholars Program," says Bates. His message to students: "The best way to become an engineer is to take the Utah Scholars coursework."



Outstanding Volunteer Jeffery Scott Bates

★ VIRGINIA

Each year Commonwealth Scholars participant William Byrd High School (WBHS) brings almost 100 percent of its students and their parents to join teachers, advisors, and community leaders for an event called One Day Registration, where students can review their course of study and become familiar with additional resources and opportunities for help. One result of this and other WBHS efforts: a remarkable increase in the number of students taking physics. This spring 108 graduates had completed physics, a 157 percent increase

from 2007. In all, the school graduated 287 students this year, and 97 were Commonwealth Scholars.

One of the individuals who has helped WBHS to succeed as a Scholars school is Patrick Patterson, site coordinator, whose work was recently commended by Virginia Governor Tim



Patrick Patterson and Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine

Kaine. Patterson notes that Scholars has also led students to challenge themselves in math as well as physics. "We recently learned that because of our desire to push all of our graduates to take algebra 2 at a minimum, our matriculating students to Virginia Western Community College are in a very strong position to avoid being enrolled in remedial mathematics courses," he says. To help other schools, Patterson and WBHS Principal Richard Turner worked with Virginia Scholars Director Betsy McClearn to develop a toolkit to share with other school divisions across the state. WBHS also hosted annual meetings to share successful practices and give other schools the opportunity to observe One Day Registration. With the expectation that all high school students in Virginia can benefit from State Scholars, the program will begin statewide expansion through Virginia's 23 community colleges in September.

For more information, please visit: www.wiche.edu/statescholars

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 \$6.6 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.newcities.org/kyscholars
- ★ **LOUISIANA**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **MARYLAND**
www.mbrt.org/scholars
- ★ **MASSACHUSETTS**
www.mastatescholars.org
- ★ **MICHIGAN**
www.michiganscholars.org
- ★ **MISSISSIPPI**
www.mississippischolars.ms
- ★ **MISSOURI**
www.showmescholars.com
- ★ **NEBRASKA**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **NEW HAMPSHIRE**
www.nhscholars.org
- ★ **NEW JERSEY**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **NEW MEXICO**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **OKLAHOMA**
www.obecinfo.com/scholars.php
- ★ **RHODE ISLAND**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **SOUTH DAKOTA**
www.doe.sd.gov/statescholars/index.asp
- ★ **TENNESSEE**
www.tennesseescholars.org
- ★ **UTAH**
www.utahscholars.org/
- ★ **VIRGINIA**
<http://vcef.net/page.php?id=10>
- ★ **WASHINGTON**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **WEST VIRGINIA**
www.educationalalliance.org/StateScholars/StateScholars.asp
- ★ **WYOMING**
www.wyomingscholars.com

Eighteen states currently participate in SSI. These states have received federal funds and have operated SSI projects in their states, or they have completed their SSI projects and remain within the SSI network. Six additional states previously were funded and operated and concluded SSI projects: Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Washington.