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CCSSO Releases Recommendations for Valuing College and Career Readiness in State Accountability Systems

Washington, D.C. (March 2, 2017) — The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Education Strategy Group (ESG) today released a series of recommendations to support states as they develop accountability systems that value college and career readiness and better support all students in achieving success after high school.

All students strive to be successful in life, and states recognize they will need multiple paths and opportunities to get there, including some type of education or training beyond high school. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides states a critical opportunity to refine their accountability systems and ensure they have the measures in place that will lead to better outcomes for all kids – not only while in school but also beyond graduation.

“States have been working to integrate career skills with the academic skills that will ensure student success after high school,” said Chris Minnich, executive director of CCSSO. “Valuing college and career readiness in a state’s accountability system is one way to elevate the skills and knowledge they need to pursue high-skill, high-paying careers after high school. The *Destination Known* report provides states with a clear set of recommendations for how they can refine their accountability system and prioritize the future success of all kids.”

“What gets measured matters, and in most states today, college and career readiness is not prioritized in school accountability systems. By addressing this we can transform the lives of millions of American students, providing them with greater opportunities and options after high school. This report provides a roadmap for states to deliver on that goal,” said Matthew Gandal, president of Education Strategy Group.

Economic projections indicate that the country needs to dramatically increase — from 50 to 65 percent — the working age population that possesses a degree, certificate or other high-quality postsecondary credential to meet future workforce needs. But the call for action is greater than economic competitiveness. It’s a matter of equity, as fewer youth from traditionally underserved subgroups transition to and successfully complete postsecondary education and training.

Accountability alone will not close the skills gap, but the information gleaned from accountability systems will lead to critical actions in the classroom to meet students' needs, such as increasing access to college-level coursework, and developing opportunities to gain career certificates that are valued by employers in their hiring and promotion decisions.

[*Destination Known: Valuing College AND Career Readiness in State Accountability Systems*](#) provides a roadmap for the measures states can use in an accountability system to support all students in achieving success after high school, as well as strategies for putting that accountability system into practice.

The report recommends four measures states should consider in their accountability systems:

- **Progress toward Post-High School Credential:** While high school graduation is a critical indicator of student success, the courses a student takes are a much stronger predictor of future success, especially more rigorous courses considered prerequisites for postsecondary education and training.
- **Co-curricular Learning and Leadership Experiences:** Extended work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships, service learning projects and other experiences allow students to apply what they learn in the classroom and develop academic, technical and professional skills outside of the classroom.
- **Assessment of Readiness:** To reflect the level of performance students need to be successful after high school it is critical that states focus high school accountability on the percentage of students scoring at the college- and career-ready level on assessment(s) that are validated by higher education and industry. This includes state assessments as well as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and industry-recognized credentials.
- **Transitions beyond High School:** If the goal of the K-12 system is to prepare students for their next step beyond high school, it is critical that states monitor how successfully students make those transitions, including college enrollment, remediation, apprenticeship and certificate programs, and job placement.

In addition, the report outlines key actions states can take to implement these measures today, or in the future, including:

1. **Highlight College- and Career-Ready Measures in High School Public Report Cards.** All states issue public report cards on the performance of their high schools. College and career readiness should be the focus of these reports going forward.
2. **Align K-12, Higher Education and Workforce Goals.** Many states have set higher education attainment goals connected to projected workforce needs. A critical next step is to set targets for K-12 schools that are aligned to the higher education goals, so that all systems are working to meet a common vision.
3. **Make College- and Career-Ready Measures Count in School Accountability Determinations.** The most valid college and career readiness measures should be given sufficient weight in states' school ratings systems so there are appropriate incentives for improvement.

This report is a part of CCSSO's [Career Readiness Program](#), which was launched in 2015 and provides direct support to states as they seek to elevate and improve career readiness programs in K-12 public schools. This Program is based on the recommendations outlined in a task force

report, [Opportunities and Options: Making Career Preparation Work for Students](#). In 2016, JPMorgan Chase collaborated with CCSSO, ESG and Advance CTE to build on this work through its [New Skills for Youth Initiative](#) and dedicated \$33 million in grant funding to help states transform career readiness systems statewide. States involved in New Skills for Youth have brought together statewide teams of employers, K-12 and postsecondary education leaders and workforce organizations.

To create the recommendations in *Destination Known: Valuing College AND Career Readiness in State Accountability Systems*, ESG and CCSSO convened a workgroup of state and national experts with the goal of providing clear guidance on the measures states should adopt to make college and career readiness the main driver of accountability systems.

The report recognizes states are at different starting points in their ability to collect, report and use data in the four measurement areas. For states that are nascent in this work, collecting and publicly reporting data at the baseline level of each category will be pivotal to their progress. For states at a more advanced starting point, increasing the sophistication of the measure definitions and transitioning from reporting to inclusion in accountability determinations will be key. Regardless of the starting point, all states can use this report to move their accountability system forward to deeply value college and career readiness for all kids.

“As leaders in business and industry, we understand first-hand the importance of making sure every child in our public education system gains the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue a high-skill, well-paying job after high school,” said Jason Tyszko, Executive Director, Policy and Programs, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Center for Education and Workforce. “We support efforts that prioritize college and career readiness to ensure every child has access to high-quality career pathways.”

“Valuing college and career readiness in our public education system is not only critical to improving our economy, but it is a matter of equity,” said Scott Sargrad, managing director of the K-12 Education Policy team at the Center for American Progress. “All students deserve the opportunity to graduate from high school ready to succeed in both college and a career, no matter their zip code or family background. We are excited to see states use this report to move toward the goal of preparing every student for success after high school.”

“We value what we measure. And in most states, we have fallen short of looking beyond the high school graduation diploma. The majority of students exiting our k-12 systems are either going to pursue college or go directly into the workforce,” said Patricia Levesque, CEO of the Foundation for Excellence in Education. “We should be including thoughtful, valid and reliable college and career readiness indicators to state accountability systems to ensure we are focused on successfully preparing them for these paths.”

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust provided funding for this report.

For more information, download *Destination Known: Valuing College AND Career Readiness in State Accountability Systems* at bit.ly/DestinationKnown.

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About CCSSO

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

About Education Strategy Group

Education Strategy Group supports America's education leaders and employers at the transition points that have the highest stakes for students and the highest impact for states, communities and economies. We bring deep experience leading policy development, advocacy and implementation work in the K-12, higher education, and workforce sectors.

About the Helmsley Charitable Trust

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting effective organizations in health, place-based initiatives, and education and human services. Since beginning its active grantmaking in 2008, Helmsley has committed more than \$1.5 billion for a wide range of charitable purposes. For more information on Helmsley and its programs, visit www.helmsleytrust.org.