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SHEEO

STATE HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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Seven States Join Attainment Academy to Develop Cross-sector Plans to Meet Their Postsecondary Attainment Goals

SHEEO and ESG launch new initiative to support state efforts to close attainment gaps

Now and into the future, a postsecondary credential with labor market value is necessary for economic success. And yet, less than half of adults have a postsecondary credential and significant attainment gaps remain across race and income status. To address these gaps, nearly every state in the country has set a postsecondary attainment goal aligned to their future workforce projections. Much work remains to meet these goals, and it will take cross-sector commitment and leadership to translate the aspirations into action.

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) and Education Strategy Group (ESG) are excited to launch a new initiative, the Attainment Academy, to support states as they prioritize and refine their strategies to meet their postsecondary education attainment goals. With generous support from ECMC Foundation and other funders, SHEEO and ESG will engage in an 18-month partnership to help seven states (California, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Tennessee) learn from and support each other as they implement action plans to close equity gaps and increase the economic vitality of their states.

The Attainment Academy will feature some of the nation's most prominent higher education leaders, including many SHEEOs and distinguished institutional presidents. Some of the states, like Tennessee and Indiana, have been working on their attainment goals for years, while others only recently established their goals. All states have expressed a strong desire to learn from each other's experiences and strategize together on how to accelerate progress.

Much has been learned over the last several years about the most effective approaches to increasing attainment and its integral connection to state workforce needs. The Attainment Academy will provide a forum for states to reflect on what's working, refine their strategies, and identify areas for cross-state collaboration. It will also help engage new policymakers and stakeholders in efforts to increase postsecondary attainment, recognizing that some may not have been in their roles when these state goals were initially set.

This initiative leverages the unique strengths of both national organizations.

“As a membership organization, one of SHEEO’s strengths is our ability to convene and lead diverse stakeholders in meaningful discussions and find common ground to move an agenda forward,” said Rob Anderson, president of SHEEO. “Through the Attainment Academy, we will bring together state teams made up of diverse leaders from chief state school officers in K-12 education to state higher education leaders, faculty and institutional leadership, and business and economic development leaders. Each of these key partners must be at the table and committed to closing equity gaps to reach their state’s attainment goal.”

The Attainment Academy will place a special emphasis on aligning education pathways with workforce needs as states recognize the importance of demonstrating the return on investment for postsecondary credentials.

“In ESG’s work across the country, we have learned that states, particularly employers and governors, want quantity **and** quality when it comes to credential attainment. A high school diploma is no longer enough, but not all postsecondary credentials are created equal,” said Matt Gandal, president of Education Strategy Group. “This initiative will help states prioritize the pathways and credentials that provide currency and value in the labor market so that state education policies are aligned with their economic development strategies.”

Through the Attainment Academy, participating states will develop a focused and coherent plan to implement the necessary strategies to reach their goals, secure a renewed commitment across various stakeholders to increase postsecondary attainment, and begin to implement their newly established priorities.

Throughout the 18-month Academy, close attention will be paid to closing equity gaps in attainment among underserved populations. No state will reach its attainment goal without closing these gaps. “We must erase these gaps, first and foremost, because it is the moral and just thing to do. All Americans deserve the opportunity to achieve the middle class that higher education provides regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status,” said SHEEO President Rob Anderson.

About SHEEO

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association is the national associating of the chief executives of statewide governing, policy, and coordinating boards of postsecondary education. Founded in 1954, SHEEO serves its members as an advocate for state policy leadership, a liaison between states and the federal government, and a vehicle for learning from and collaborating with peers. SHEEO also serves as a manager of multistate teams and as a source of information and analysis on educational and public policy issues. Together with its members, SHEEO advances public policies and academic practices that enable Americans to attain education beyond high school and achieve success in the 21st century economy.

About ESG

Education Strategy Group is a mission-driven, national consulting firm specializing in K-12, higher education and workforce solutions. ESG brings years of experience helping states and communities around the country devise and implement strategies to align education and workforce goals and implement strategies to meet those goals. ESG’s team is made up of nationally recognized individuals who have held leadership positions in governors’ offices, state higher education agencies, state K-12 agencies, the federal government, and national organizations. ESG brings deep experience devising and implementing strategies to positively impact student success.