



TRANSITION POINTS

The Education Strategy Group Newsletter

This is a deeply painful and difficult time for our communities and our nation. The senseless killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and far too many other Black Americans in recent years are a stark reminder of just how far we remain from achieving our goal of racial justice and equality. As an organization, we grieve for the lives needlessly taken. And we are collectively distressed about the state of our country.

We have a moral and ethical responsibility to stand against racism and prejudice. No one in our country should be subject to persecution based on their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or beliefs. We must lead not simply with words of solace, but with actions to deliberately build bridges to a future where equality is not just a dream; it's a reality for each and every individual.

At ESG, we believe in the power of education to lift both individuals and communities to greater opportunity, economic mobility, and prosperity. We also believe that education can help create the conditions for a more just and equitable society. Today we join millions across America to stand up against racism, hate, and intolerance, and we double down on our commitment to drive quality education and training opportunities to those who have been traditionally underserved.

Diversity is our strength. We will not relent in our pursuit of social justice and a level playing field for students of color and their families.

ESG Announces New Partnership to Advance Quality Shorter-Term Credentials

ESG is pleased to announce that with the generous support of the Lumina Foundation and in partnership with the National Skills Coalition (NSC), we are expanding our efforts to help postsecondary systems and institutions and workforce development organizations include shorter-term credentialing options within programs that offer viable pathways to economic opportunity. This work, which will build upon our existing efforts to help states identify and prioritize high-value non-degree credentials, will add a direct focus on including these credentials as part of a COVID-19 recovery strategy. We look forward to embarking on this important effort to help ensure that individuals can access high-quality, shorter-term credentialing opportunities that will set them up for success in the shifting labor market. Learn more in the partnership announcement and our new blog post.



#AccelerateRecovery: Explorations of Critical Strategies for Equitable Economic Recovery

In early April, ESG began publishing the #AccelerateRecovery blog series, offering



examinations of key strategies for leadership to prioritize in their efforts to accelerate economic recovery for our country and our most vulnerable populations. All posts are available [here](#), and below is a roundup of posts published in May.

Double Down on FAFSA Completion: FAFSA completion rates are down across the country compared with this point last year, hinting at a worrying trend of reduced postsecondary enrollment. Senior Associate Lauren Norton highlights how some states and districts have pivoted their FAFSA completion strategies to maintain momentum in these challenging times.

Stop the College Readiness COVID Slide: Data clearly show that individuals with a postsecondary credential fare best in an economic downturn and subsequent recovery, but the longstanding problem of inadequate academic readiness for higher education is only worsening through the pandemic. ESG Senior Director Ryan Reyna offers three key strategies for states to prioritize academic supports and help students catch up.

Keep the Attainment Agenda Front and Center: Associate Director Annie Phillips discusses the critical work that the states in ESG and SHEEO's Attainment Academy are doing to make the higher education attainment agenda a driver of economic recovery.

Expand Access to Shorter-Term Credentials that Lead to Good Jobs: ESG Principal Kathleen Mathers introduces forthcoming work and key principles for helping more states identify and prioritize shorter-term credentialing options to put more learners on a path to economic and career success, especially those displaced by COVID-19 who need to upskill or re-skill to get back on an economically viable path.

Stay tuned for more strategies, ideas, and reflections as this series continues in the weeks to come.

Making A Comeback: A Webinar Series with ACCT and SHEEO

ESG is joining our partners at The Association of Community College Trustees and The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association to present [a series of online forums](#) designed to help state and institutional leaders anticipate and respond to challenges facing higher education due to COVID-19 and the economic crisis the pandemic has caused.



These online events will offer insights and advice from leading experts on shifting labor markets, high school to college transitions, fall semester contingency planning, and more in the post-pandemic environment. The third event - [Contingency Planning for the Fall](#) - will be held **LATER TODAY**, June 3, at 2:00 p.m. ET.

Recordings of the previous two webinars are also available online:

- [Planning for a Changing Labor Market](#)
- [Bridging K-12 to College Transitions](#)

Learn more and keep an eye out for information about future webinars [here](#).

ESG and SHEEO Host Second Attainment Academy



In May, ESG and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) virtually convened leaders from seven states for the second meeting of the Attainment Academy. Teams from CA, IN, LA, MI, NJ, NC, and TN joined together to refine and adapt their plans for reaching their postsecondary attainment goals, building upon the work the cohort began together last October. States spent the

majority of the time sharing strategies for reorienting priorities and maintaining momentum for student success in the challenging COVID-19 environment. In face of the challenges posed by the pandemic, Attainment Academy teams are focusing their efforts on 1) Keeping an explicit focus on equity at the heart of all attainment strategies; 2) Engaging and supporting adult learners; and 3) Prioritizing robust student financial assistance. For more on the strategies states are developing in each of these areas, check out our recent [blog post](#). Coming out of the May meeting, state teams will be regrouping to prioritize actions that can be taken now to position attainment as a recovery strategy and finalize their long-term plans for the Academy's final meeting in September.

State Spotlight: Hawaii Builds Bridges to Support Seniors' Postsecondary Transitions

In recognition of the threat that the COVID-19 crisis poses to students' transitions to higher education, Hawaii is taking important proactive steps to help students stay the course in pursuing their postsecondary ambitions. The Next Steps to Your Future initiative will connect with Hawaii's 11,000 graduating high school seniors to support them in transitioning to postsecondary education, training, or employment. The initiative consists of two strategies:



1. Connecting with graduating high school seniors and providing coaching, “nudging,” and advising for students to make informed critical steps toward achieving their post-high plans.
2. Supporting students' transition with career planning via free community college classes, which include development of a career profile, survey of occupations, and work-based learning experiences based on students' career areas of interest.

Hawaii's plan recognizes that customized high-touch support and free exploration and planning resources will be critical in helping students successfully transition into higher education in this challenging environment. For more examples of ways states are pivoting to virtual advising and support, check out our recent [blog post](#).

ESG HIGHLIGHTS: Meet Our New Team Member

Tiffani Williams, Senior Associate

Tiffani joins ESG to support the growing portfolio of work around assisting states in increasing postsecondary attainment. She has spent her career in the K-



12 and postsecondary education sectors, working in academic and student affairs, public policy, and applied research—conducting studies on K-16 alignment, STEM student career development, financial aid, degree attainment, and socioeconomic outcomes. Tiffani has served as a lead researcher and policy analyst at a number of impact-driven organizations including, most recently, the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University and The Education Trust-New York. Previously, she worked as a Program Specialist in P-20 at the University System of Maryland. Tiffani holds a PhD in Higher and Postsecondary Education from New York University, an MA in Higher Education Administration from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a BS in Graphic Media from Rochester Institute of Technology in her hometown, Rochester, NY. To learn more about [Tiffani](#) and her work supporting ESG's [Postsecondary Attainment portfolio](#), visit our [website](#).



Education Strategy Group is a mission-driven consulting firm that works with K-12, higher education, and workforce leaders to achieve greater impact. We work across sectors and across the aisle to move the needle on issues that are critical to improving student success.

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