

State Legislatures and Higher Education Policy

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas



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Growing Legislative Interest in Higher Education Accountability

- **Tight state budgets**
- **College completion rates everywhere are dismal**
- **Changing demographics in states**
- **Higher education as an investment to help economic development**
- **Competitiveness and job outsourcing**
- **New competition from University of Phoenix, on-line learning and other private for-profit entities**
- **Hearing from constituents about cost**



Accountability Strategies

- **Setting clear statewide goals about state priorities: A Public Agenda for Higher Education**
- **Focusing policy on outcomes**
- **Shifting toward outcomes-based funding**
- **Encouraging higher ed/K-12 connections**



State Examples

- **Oregon 40/40/20:** By 2025 40% of Oregonians will have a bachelor's degree, 40% will have an associate degree or certificate, and 20 percent will have a high school diploma.
- **Virginia Top Jobs:** Increase the number of college grads prepared for the top job opportunities.
- **Illinois Public Agenda Task Force:** Increase access, affordability, attainment and research and innovation
- **Tennessee: Complete College Tennessee Act:** Improve economic and workforce development, increase degree production, target underserved populations, promote institutional collaboration.
- **Kentucky Strategic Agenda:** Improve adult literacy and overall educational attainment.
- **Texas Closing the Gaps:** Reduce achievement/completion gaps.
- **California Master Plan:** Higher education as vital to state economic development.



Legislative Roles and Responsibilities

- **Set state goals: A "Public Agenda" for higher education.**
- **The discussion is about *state needs*, it is not about individual institutions.**
- **Bring state stakeholders to the table to discuss goals, strategies, implementation and data collection.**
- **Think and plan about the entire postsecondary enterprise and all the opportunities for students within it.**
- **Performance Funding is one piece of a funding and accountability strategy.**
- **Think and plan long term and strategically for the future.**

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