**Executive Summary**

*A Regional Campaign to Increase Participation in Adult Learning in the South*

“SREB states can lead the nation in educational progress,” SREB asserted in *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education. The goals for adults focus on literacy and job training, achieving a GED and reaching national averages in the number of postsecondary degrees. These goals cannot be achieved without greater adult participation in education. An estimated 61.5 million adults over the age of 25 were not participating in education (2000 data). Just to reach the national average in postsecondary achievement means that 1.3 million more adults in the South will need to obtain a baccalaureate degree. A first step in reaching this goal will be to persuade more high school dropouts to participate in programs aimed at GED attainment and to further pursue postsecondary education.

SREB also asserted in the *Challenge to Lead* goals that technology, with its continued use and development, is central to reaching these goals. Now SREB has embarked on a major initiative to establish a Web site and regional network that will allow adults to plan for, enroll in and pay for their college courses electronically. The Web site will be a broker of adult learner resources and services, and the support of a grant obtained from Lumina Foundation for Education will assist greatly in marketing the site to potential users.

The primary elements of the regional campaign are:

**The Adult Learning Campaign:** The SREB regional campaign will build upon the current “Go Alliance” established among SREB states to share media messages and materials about access to higher education. A dual-purpose Adult Learning Toolkit will be developed to 1) provide a “how to” framework for building a media campaign including message development and effective community outreach; and 2) build a network of grassroots organizations currently working with adults and connect them to resources and services utilizing SREB’s expanded Electronic Campus Web site ([www.electroniccampus.org](http://www.electroniccampus.org)). Ultimately, the goal is to equip states, local organizations and employers with tools, techniques, and strategies that will help them easily communicate with adults about programs, services, and financial aid opportunities.

SREB, in partnership with selected states and industry groups, will establish two Industry Sector Pilots. These pilots will target low-wage employment sectors with high levels of minority and ethnic employment (e.g. construction, hotel, and restaurant workers, low-wage health care workers). The experience of the broader 16-state media campaign outlined above will be used to focus on getting employees of these sectors into appropriate educational experiences.

**The Policy Campaign:** A second objective is to address policy issues and barriers that confront adults. This component of the project is essential: we cannot expect a media campaign aimed at increasing demand to succeed unless there is an equal effort to increase the “supply” of programs and support for adult learners. Much of the groundwork for this campaign has already been developed within the structure of the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory of SREB. The policy campaign will advance this agenda through a series of meetings and reports aimed at SREB prime constituents – governors and legislators.

**The Internet Campaign:** A third objective is to increase the use of the expanded Electronic Campus Web site. This site will be particularly valuable in reaching associate and baccalaureate degree holders seeking continuing education and advanced degrees (e.g. nurses and teachers). But we also expect to increase the value of the site to underserved minority and ethnic groups as well as those seeking adult basic education, GED, workforce skills training and ESL instruction.