

SREB

State College and Career Readiness Initiative

Final Progress Reports

Southern
Regional
Education
Board

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Supported by the
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



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Executive Summary

This progress report provides extensive and comprehensive details on the work of SREB and its partner states in the grant project titled the *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)*, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The initiative began in early 2008 and ended in April 2011 and was designed to implement SREB's model agenda for a statewide college- and career-readiness strategy. The model agenda includes six key elements:

1. Statewide college- and career-readiness standards.
2. Readiness assessments in high school (11th grade).
3. School curriculum and transitional courses.
4. Teacher development for college readiness (in-service and pre-service).
5. Postsecondary education application of the standards.
6. School and college accountability.

During the grant, SREB worked with six states — Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia — on scaling and strengthening their own state college- and career-readiness initiatives against SREB's model agenda. Each state came with different perspectives and at different points in the process. Each state adapted SREB's model to reflect differences in state policies and practices, resulting in individual but very similar state college- and career-readiness initiatives. By the end of the three-year project, all states had adopted college- and career-readiness standards and initiated work on readiness assessments. Five had made considerable progress in revising the curriculum and in developing and implementing transitional courses in math and English. All participating states also had taken steps to address teacher development concerns, improve postsecondary education's application of the standards, and strengthen school and college accountability.

The following chapters summarize the work of SREB and the six partner states. Chapter 1 captures an overview of the project, detailing the need for this work and SREB's response to the college-readiness dilemma in the South. It also highlights information on each of the six key elements, SREB's position on best practices in establishing and implementing each element, and a brief summary of each state's progress on the elements. Chapters 2 through 7 provide detailed pictures of each state, describing the state's work on the six key elements and offering suggestions and observations to the state on work moving forward.

Key lessons learned from the participating states include:

- 1) There is strong evidence that SREB's model agenda works.
- 2) Improving college/career readiness requires a long-term commitment and is a continuous process.
- 3) Frequent communicating, monitoring and reporting are essential.
- 4) External fiscal and human resources add value.
- 5) Other environmental events can have significant impact in positive and negative ways.

For more information on this project, including other publications, an informational video and other resources, please visit the SREB College and Career Readiness website at: http://www.sreb.org/page/1073/college_and_career_readiness.html.

Chapter 1: Final Report on the SREB *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)*, 2008-2011

The Need for Statewide College and Career Readiness Initiatives

Too few public high school graduates across the nation are well prepared academically for college or career training, and many state leaders and policy-makers either underestimate or do not recognize the size and nature of the readiness problem. Research by ACT Inc. and a number of states indicates that 70 percent of high school graduates — *including many college-bound seniors* — are not ready for further study. Solving this problem is complex and requires navigating many educational issues at the statewide level.

Strong education alignment, with seamless transitions from high school to college, is key to preparing more students for college and career training.

Strong alignment of K-12 and postsecondary education, with seamless transitions from high school to college, is key to the solution and has long been an objective of policy-makers and education leaders. But only in the recent past have productive efforts to increase the college and career readiness of all students become widespread. Driven by a number of external forces — a sagging economy, higher demand for college courses, and greater college access for more of the nation's population — state and national leaders from the policy, education and business communities have begun to make college and career readiness a top priority and, in many states, have taken significant steps to make it a reality.

Support for increasing students' college and career readiness has come from many directions. In addition to the policy, education and business communities, several philanthropic organizations have provided considerable funding to enable changes in the classroom as well as at district, state, regional and national levels. By investing in policy, practice and research, a growing number of foundations have fueled interest in and commitment to readiness.

College readiness is a major concern in the South, in particular, where education attainment rates have been lower historically than in other regions and the college-going rates of recent high school graduates have trailed national averages. Despite some progress in a few states, by 2008 no Southern state had completed a comprehensive, statewide initiative to improve students' college and career readiness. A few states had defined readiness standards and aligned them with existing secondary school academic standards. In some cases, the state K-12 education board had adopted them. Achieve Inc. played a pivotal role in this effort. A few states had developed school-based tests that measure students' progress on state-defined readiness standards. But no state had made improving college and career readiness a formal component of the state school accountability system or had focused the senior year of high school and teachers' professional development on readiness standards. At that time, SREB argued that state readiness initiatives needed to be started, restarted or accelerated before states could substantially improve students' readiness for learning beyond high school.

SREB's Response

Strengthening the link between K-12 and postsecondary education has been a major goal for SREB for many years. To help address the needs in Southern states to increase college and career readiness and support the interests of policy and education leaders to improve opportunity for all students, SREB launched the

Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI). In 2008, SREB received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with the goal of helping states firmly entrench their own statewide college- and career-readiness initiatives in state policy-making.

To ensure that states make significant progress on readiness, *SSCRI* is grounded in SREB's concrete, comprehensive **model agenda** for states, which includes six key elements:

1. Statewide college- and career-readiness standards.
2. Readiness assessments in high school (11th grade).
3. School curriculum and transitional courses.
4. Teacher development for college readiness (in-service and pre-service).
5. Postsecondary education application of the standards.
6. School and college accountability.

From March 2008 to April 2011, SREB helped **six member states** (all were participating in the American Diploma Project, or ADP) to accelerate their progress on statewide initiatives to improve students' college and career readiness. Each of the six states adopted general steps to implement a college-readiness initiative, and it was important to ensure that these individual state "action agendas" were specific and comprehensive enough to help states accelerate and deepen implementation of the ADP agenda.

Through the *SSCRI*, SREB provided assistance to Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia by helping build strong commitments among state leaders and policy-makers to solving the readiness problem statewide and supporting each state's implementation of the model agenda.

SREB was positioned to help each state meet the following **objectives**:

1. Build strong commitments among state leaders and policy-makers to solve the readiness problem statewide.
2. Determine the status of the state's college- and career-readiness initiative, through an evaluation based on a practice-based model statewide college- and career-readiness agenda.
3. Develop a state plan to begin, restart or accelerate a statewide college- and career-readiness initiative.
4. Assist with state implementation of selected agenda steps.

This report summarizes the progress made on each of the agenda's components and provides individual state progress reports on strengthening statewide commitment and implementing the key areas of SREB's model agenda. In addition to this report, SREB also has published a report describing the transitional courses in five of these states: *Statewide Transitional Courses for College Readiness*.

Statewide Commitments to College and Career Readiness

Nationally, state education agencies, boards, officers, sectors, and legislative and executive government branches were slow to unite completely around common readiness goals or a specifically defined readiness agenda before 2008. The initial challenge for SREB's project was to understand and describe the level of effort in each state and then help build momentum for a statewide initiative.

The goals of SREB's *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)* were to help states firmly entrench statewide college- and career-readiness initiatives in state policy-making to ensure that significant progress was made to improve students' readiness based on a comprehensive action agenda.

Most states that had begun efforts to improve students' college and career readiness lacked adequate recognition among state leaders and policy-makers of how to effectively address the many challenges statewide. To build a college-readiness initiative, states need practical strategies that will coalesce all of K-12 and higher education around the same set of readiness standards and related student assessments, and that also will ensure that other state priorities are protected — such as college access and admissions, increased high school graduation rates, and federal requirements.

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Although legislation has been a significant driver of policy change in some states, others rely on action through the state board of education, the department of education or higher education agency. Regardless of the policy level used, states need to make readiness a major statewide priority and involve key constituents. Consequently, *SSCRI*'s immediate task was to **achieve leadership support** for a college- and career-readiness initiative.

In collaboration with a few leaders, *SSCRI* identified and convened a leadership team in each state. The structure, membership and role of the state team was evaluated and reconstituted, when needed, to ensure the right set and range of state leaders and the leadership team's role in project activities. Early meetings focused on the purpose and scope of the project, discussion of readiness issues in the state, and identification of individuals to interview to better understand each state's status.

SSCRI and a team of national experts interviewed a large number of educational and political leaders in each state and a representative number of local school and higher education officials to gather background and context for an initial evaluation report.

The **evaluation reports** were state-specific and based heavily on reviews of state data and policies and on interviews with state officials who have worked on (or need to be involved in) college- and career-readiness activities. Because the evaluation of state readiness initiatives was influenced by state officials' perceptions, the information provided by the varied parties was weighed carefully, compared and reconciled. Each report appraised the level of statewide recognition of readiness as a major priority and the level of commitment to readiness by state leaders. Most important, each report described the state's status on college and career readiness, the direction and actions the state should take on its agenda, and the state policies that leaders would need to develop in order to succeed. With the help of outside experts, *SSCRI* presented each state's report to its leadership team and made the case that urgent action was needed to push for higher education levels among each state's population.

State Progress

All six states have demonstrated their commitment to a comprehensive college- and career-readiness agenda. Florida, Kentucky and Texas had legislation in place or passed bills during the project to address all or parts of a readiness initiative. Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia employed other strategies to advance their college-readiness agendas.

- **Florida** legislation addresses some of the key elements of a statewide initiative: A bill in 2008 set the stage for identifying college-readiness standards and placement, and new legislation in 2011 further strengthened state-level efforts for college readiness.

- **Kentucky** passed key legislation in 2009 that framed one of the nation’s best general outlines of a state-wide college-readiness initiative, ensuring that revised academic standards were aligned from elementary to high school to postsecondary education.
- **Maryland** used the Governor’s P-20 Leadership Council and the P-20 College Success Task Force to build commitment and buy-in for new college-readiness policies. The Task Force examined the state’s policies and practices concerning the alignment of public secondary and postsecondary expectations, standards, and student learning outcomes.
- **Texas** had the most comprehensive set of laws when SREB’s project began, dating back to 2006. Legislation the following year (and again in 2009) further embedded readiness in education reform and addressed all aspects of a comprehensive, statewide readiness initiative.
- **Virginia’s** Department of Education focused on strengthening the state’s Standards of Learning (SOL) and collaborating with the Virginia Community College System and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to develop a set of higher readiness standards in mathematics and English. The state Board of Education adopted the standards.
- **West Virginia** concentrated on collaborations between its education agencies — the Department of Education (WVDE) and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) — on the college-readiness agenda. While there was no specific legislation on college readiness, legislation tied to the state’s Global21 Initiative supported college-readiness objectives.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Standards

The emergence of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) on the national scene by 2009 had a profound effect on state leaders’ dialogues on college readiness. When SREB began the *SSCRI* project, the CCSS were beginning to be discussed in K-12 agencies but not within postsecondary education or the policy community, so they were not prominent on state agendas. Achieve Inc. and the ADP worked effectively to help a number of states develop college-readiness standards. Of the few states that initially defined readiness standards, most did not fully embed them into state-adopted, pre-K-12 school academic standards. In some cases, the state K-12 education board adopted them.

Defining and adopting readiness standards are essential first steps, but states must go beyond simple content descriptions of the standards — the descriptions form the official statement of the standards as adopted by the state and provide the foundation from which the standards are interpreted and manifested by the schools and their teachers. Successful statewide college-readiness initiatives depend on an **effective process** for taking the content standards through a series of steps that progressively interpret and define them in student performance terms. General content descriptions must be converted into performance terms — i.e., how well can something be done or known.

Deriving and **building common, statewide understanding of what student performance is expected** is challenging. These performance expectations are defined through the development of test items, rubrics, curricular materials, assignments and associated grading protocols. The performance expectations are further interpreted through new teacher preparation and professional development.

The challenges for *SSCRI* and the six participating states were considerable: to engage educator and policy-maker **support** of comprehensive college-readiness initiatives grounded in a single set of

A statewide college-readiness initiative needs one set of performance standards for reading, writing and mathematics that are shared specifically by all public schools and postsecondary institutions.

specific readiness standards with performance expectations; and to make significant **progress on the remaining elements** of the readiness agenda — curriculum, assessment, accountability and professional development.

State Progress

Four of the six states in the project adopted the CCSS and two did not, preferring to work with their existing state standards. This development worked well for the project in that it allowed SREB the opportunity to work with different approaches.

- Prior to **Florida's** adoption of the CCSS, the state had begun to identify college-readiness standards as a result of legislation. K-12 and postsecondary education created a blueprint of college-readiness standards for a set of specialized mathematics and English courses for students who do not test as ready for college.
- In February 2010, **Kentucky** was the first state to adopt the CCSS, a move consistent with 2009 legislation to create immediate and far-reaching changes to achieve college- and career-readiness goals. The centerpiece of the legislation was the mandate to ensure that the revised academic standards were aligned from elementary to high school to postsecondary education.
- **Maryland** also adopted the CCSS in 2010, shortly after the College Success Task Force (a subgroup of the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council) issued its report reflecting many of the suggestions in *SSCR's* evaluation report. K-12 and higher education are working on a single definition of readiness.
- **Texas** had begun work on the college-readiness agenda before the advent of the national CCSS. In response to 2006 legislation, college-readiness standards were developed jointly between the sectors. In 2008, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) adopted and the commissioner of education approved the Texas College Readiness Standards (CRS), which establish student skill levels needed to succeed in entry-level college courses.
- In lieu of adopting the CCSS, the **Virginia** Department of Education continued work in progress to scale up the state's Standards of Learning (SOL) and align the standards with the CCSS. The state Board of Education approved the revised SOL in mathematics and English in 2009 and 2010.
- The **West Virginia** State Board of Education approved the CCSS in May 2010 and in May 2011 adopted an implementation schedule that calls for grades two through 12 to implement the aligned CCSS and Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs) in 2014-2015.

In sum, all six states made decisions early in their participation to **either adopt the CCSS or strengthen existing state standards**. This was a pivotal juncture because a single group of postsecondary readiness standards is the foundation of a systemic statewide college-readiness initiative and the key to the effective implementation of all succeeding steps.

Readiness Assessments

SREB's model agenda calls for assessments that measure students' progress on the state-adopted readiness standards, with qualifying scores that equate to the performance levels expected for first-year college students to succeed academically.

Assessments of progress on the standards at the end of the **junior year** of high school can be used to direct students to targeted assistance in the 12th grade to remedy deficiencies — or to certify them as ready to begin postsecondary or advance study immediately. Making better use of the senior year to help students transition to postsecondary education holds a particular allure for many who believe that the 12th grade is not used effectively.

Beyond *when* to test for readiness in high school, a major assessment issue is the *kind* of test to use. Early experience saw a few states elect to use the SAT/ACT tests to also test for readiness. Over the past several years, many states and organizations such as Achieve Inc. and SREB have come to favor the use of state school assessments based directly on the state-adopted readiness standards, especially end-of-course (EOC) examinations in Algebra II, or a combination of Algebra II and geometry and statistics, and English III.

The use of tests based on specific state-adopted readiness standards has several advantages. High school teachers tend to teach to the official state standards, especially if these standards are the basis for school accountability, professional development and other functions. These state-based assessments are more transparent to teachers with respect to the standards and performance expectations on which they are based. They can be effective diagnostic tools and provide specific information on performance on specific state standards and performance changes over time.

It is important to note the rise of two assessment consortia — the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) — as part of the national standards movement. Each consortium of states is developing a common assessment that reflects the CCSS and can be used by multiple states. The new assessments will be given to students in participating states in the 2014-2015 school year. The assessments will generate longitudinal data on student performance to provide feedback to students and teachers on progress in meeting the standards.

Eleventh-grade assessments affirm the levels of performance needed on readiness standards, give high school students and teachers specific feedback on progress in meeting the standards, and identify students who need targeted help in the senior year.

State Progress

Assessments tied to state standards are essential to states' comprehensive college- and career-readiness efforts. All of the states in SREB's project have addressed assessment issues through revisions to state tests or commitment to a multi-state assessment consortium.

- **Florida** made considerable changes in its assessment system prior to and during participation in the *SSCRI*. Legislation required both secondary and postsecondary sectors to expand the college- and career-readiness testing of 11th-grade students. The state will now use its new Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (P.E.R.T.), which is aligned with the Florida Postsecondary Readiness Competencies (PRCs) and will allow high school staff to place students in appropriate transitional courses in their senior year.
- Several years ago, **Kentucky** established a 10th-grade readiness test and the 11th-grade ACT as instruments to test for readiness. Later legislation paved the way for end-of-course (EOC) assessments and required a series of diagnostic assessments. A bill in 2009 continued these and added an examination in grade eight to determine high school readiness, ACT PLAN in grade 10, and the ACT in grade 11. Kentucky will use EOC tests that include the college-readiness standards in reading, writing and math. Kentucky participates in the PARCC.
- **Maryland** is also a member of the PARCC and appears to be moving toward more rigorous assessments. The state has required all students to pass the Maryland High School Assessments (HSAs), but these EOC tests and their performance expectations are generally acknowledged to represent floor performance requirements that do not approach college-readiness expectations.

- **Texas** legislation requires a new assessment system based on EOC tests in 12 subjects, with Algebra II and English III tests used to determine college readiness. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), working with THECB and Texas educators, is developing a new assessment system — phasing out the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and phasing in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The TEA’s transition plan links assessment to college and career readiness; performance expectations will be high enough that graduating students will be ready for postsecondary work.
- **Virginia** reviewed its Standards of Learning (SOL) and assessments, supported by a VDOE and State Council of Higher Education study of secondary and postsecondary student performance data, to determine college-ready cut scores on the SOL. The state Board of Education is using the results of the data study and the *College and Career Readiness Performance Expectations* to establish readiness cut scores on English III and Algebra II SOL assessments.
- **West Virginia** uses WESTEST2 — a custom-designed, summative assessment of the state’s Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs) in core subjects for grades three through 11. The WVDE recently revised the WESTEST based on an analysis of its standards, performance results and expectations with other measures of college and career readiness and expects to validate WESTEST scores with first-year college performance. The junior-year WESTEST2 mathematics, reading and language arts scores determine students’ college readiness. West Virginia is a member of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), but until the SBAC assessments are in place, the state will continue using WESTEST to measure students’ readiness.

While some of these assessment procedures were in place before SREB’s college-readiness initiative began, the discussions that this project catalyzed around rigorous common standards and early readiness assessments helped policy-makers recognize the critical role that assessments play in helping underprepared students take transitional classes and graduate prepared for college-level work. While states are moving toward assessment methods that measure progress on the readiness standards, **the challenge remains to set qualifying scores high enough that they equate to the readiness performance levels** expected for first-year college students to succeed academically.

Curriculum and Transitional Courses

Wide acceptance of the CCSS and analysis of individual state standards for alignment with college-readiness knowledge and skills lay a solid foundation for helping students leave high school prepared for college and work.

Supplemental curriculum and programs designed to teach the skills needed to succeed in first-year, credit-bearing college courses should be developed and taught in transitional courses to help students who are at risk of graduating without being college-ready.

But more changes are needed to ensure that all students are ready. There are no quick fixes, and the public school curriculum should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, mapping back to at least grade eight.

Providing high school students with the opportunity to find out if they are college-ready in math and English is a central component of SREB’s statewide readiness agenda, even though higher and more explicit readiness standards likely will cause at least a short-term spike in the numbers of students identified as not ready for college. This means offering a **diagnostic test aligned with college-readiness indicators in the sophomore or junior year of high school**. Students identified as not meeting the readiness standards should be provided senior-year instruction to help them meet these standards before high school graduation.

SREB recommends that several points be considered in developing these senior-year courses:

- That the initial focus be on English/language arts (specifically, expository reading and writing) and mathematics.
- That the courses be explicitly based on the college-readiness skills mutually determined by K-12 and postsecondary education.
- That successful completion of these activities be creditable to the high school diploma.
- That these activities be developed jointly by public school and postsecondary staff, faculty and teachers.
- That a common assessment of student performance on these 12th-grade activities be developed to determine if each student meets readiness standards. If so, the student should be deemed ready and not subject to further placement testing in postsecondary education.

Because states have lacked appropriate high school courses, especially in math and English, to help students overcome academic weaknesses, the development of **transitional courses aligned with college-readiness skills** has been a strong focus of SREB's work in participating states.

State Progress

Five of the six *SSCRI* states created teams of K-12 teachers and postsecondary faculty to design and pilot these courses.

- **Florida's** Department of Education (FLDOE) released state standards and descriptions for one-semester, one-half credit elective transitional courses in 2008. Concerned that one semester was not enough time for many students, the FLDOE and Florida College System developed yearlong, one-credit elective courses aligned with entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. Successful completion while in high school may exempt students from further placement testing and college remediation. A 2011 law requires high schools to advise students of deficiencies and requires schools to offer and students to take the necessary transitional course(s).
- **Kentucky** law requires schools to provide a transitional course or monitored intervention to every student not meeting college-readiness benchmarks in English/language arts or math. Statewide teams of secondary and postsecondary educators designed transitional math and reading courses aligned with the revised Kentucky Core Academic Standards and with college- and career-readiness standards. Math and reading courses were launched in September 2010.
- The **Maryland** State Department of Education (MSDE) decided not to develop and implement transitional courses until after the state has fully implemented its Common Core Curriculum Frameworks and a nationally accepted common core assessment. The state has an opportunity to base transitional courses on the common core readiness standards and reflect readiness assessments being designed by the national assessment consortia. The MSDE plans to develop transitional courses for all high school students, not just seniors, in 2014.
- **Texas** legislation has supported 12th-grade, college-preparatory courses for students unprepared for college-level study. Working in teams, K-12 teachers and higher education faculty are developing transitional courses in mathematics and English/language arts for high school seniors who pass the EOC exams but do not meet the college-readiness performance level.

- The **Virginia** Department of Education (VDOE) developed College and Career Ready (CCR) Performance Expectations for English and mathematics collaboratively with higher education faculty. In addition, the performance expectations were used to develop Virginia’s capstone courses (senior-year transitional courses). Capstone courses are for students who have satisfactorily completed the necessary courses, have scored minimum proficiency on SOL tests and are not college-ready. The VDOE plans to pilot the capstone courses during the 2011-2012 school year.
- In **West Virginia**, students must take a college transitional math course in their senior year if they do not pass WESTEST2, beginning in fall 2011. Students in the course will be required to take an EOC test; those achieving the qualifying score fulfill the placement exam requirement for postsecondary education. An English transitional course is under development. Teachers will pilot it in 2011, with statewide implementation in the 2012-2013 school year. The state Board of Education anticipates revising current policy during the 2011-2012 school year to require that students not meeting college-ready standards in English enroll in a transitional course and that all districts offer the course.

Teacher Development

Standards, assessments and curriculum are only part of the readiness task. Another key objective of each state’s efforts to increase college and career readiness must be to ensure that all teachers utilize the college- and career-readiness standards effectively in their classroom instruction. *All teachers must understand the standards* and

Teacher development targeted specifically to the readiness standards is crucial to ensure that all teachers — both pre-service and in-service — fully understand the readiness standards, their priority, and how to teach them effectively.

how to engage their students to learn at high levels. College readiness needs to be part of both teacher preparation (pre-service) and professional development (in-service). Effective teachers will sustain and give meaning to the readiness standards, assessments, curriculum and transitional courses, and accountability elements.

That’s why the design of SREB’s college-readiness model focuses on a single, central operating principle: Determining what will maximize the conditions in which classroom teachers statewide can best prepare students for college study. Linking all action steps and decisions about the implementation of a readiness initiative to this one criterion is the most effective way to connect standards to testing to curriculum to teacher development (both pre-service and in-service) and to school and college accountability.

To ensure a coordinated, systemic approach to pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development, SREB asked for statewide plans to help teachers understand the readiness standards, the expected levels of performance, and how to use the standards to teach in grades eight through 12. In addition to addressing teacher development, adjustments in states’ teacher licensure and certification state regulations are needed.

State Progress

The six states in this study are in various stages of their teacher development efforts, but all have begun the process of embedding the standards, assessments and accountability in pre- and in-service teacher development.

- The **Florida** Department of Education’s (FLDOE) professional development plan informs teachers and others of the CCSS and transitional courses. During 2010, the FLDOE held 13 train-the-trainer workshops on English and math transitional courses across the state for district-level principals, guidance counselors, teachers and others so they could help prepare transitional-course teachers in their schools and districts. Florida College System faculty helped train teachers in their service area.

- **Kentucky** legislation addresses both in-service and pre-service teacher development. In 2010, Kentucky’s education agencies developed a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the commitments of the state Department of Education (KDE) and Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE). One goal for postsecondary institutions is that all developmental education, College of Education, and College of Arts and Sciences faculties will have access to training on the Kentucky Core Academic Standards by 2011; the state’s 2010-2012 budget specified funds for the professional development of certain postsecondary faculty. The CPE is considering creating a college-readiness center at a university to ensure that professional development will continue.
- Using federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funds, the **Maryland** State Department of Education is providing professional development on the CCSS and the Maryland Common Core Curriculum Frameworks. The state will hold 11 Educator Effectiveness Academies during summer 2011. Every school will send a team to the academies for training and will deliver that content back to every teacher in their school. The state plans to provide additional professional development for the CCSS and assessments over the next three years.
- **Texas** provides professional development on the state’s College Readiness Standards through teacher academies. The TEA will use critical college- and career-readiness skills within the TEKS for teacher preparation and professional development, but other elements — including the assessments and transitional courses — must also be in place. Teams developing the transitional courses also are shaping a statewide plan for teacher development. In spring 2011, the TEA will pilot an online course to assist teachers in understanding the transitional courses and related materials, as well as instruct teachers on how to teach the content to their students.
- **Virginia** will provide technical assistance to high school teachers for the capstone courses, and four state universities will use federal teacher training funds to establish professional development centers that support schools’ efforts to improve students’ readiness. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) will issue grants that prioritize support for teacher professional development on the performance expectations. The postsecondary institutions will design programs for teachers that emphasize improving college- and career-readiness instruction and implementing the capstone courses.
- In **West Virginia**, specific teacher development plans will be finalized once the revised state standards are in place. One area under way, however, relates to the Online Writing assessment. The Department of Education developed “video scenarios” and worksheets based on actual situations to assist teachers and others in administering the WESTEST2 Online Writing assessment. Higher education representatives will help create a seamless transition between pre-service teachers and those working in the classrooms.

Postsecondary Application of the Readiness Standards

SREB’s model agenda calls for K-12 and all of higher education in each state to use and apply the same performance levels on the readiness standards. The same core readiness standards should drive college preparation in all public schools and all placement/readiness procedures and decisions in postsecondary education.

Higher education’s role should be one of enabling and helping K-12 — creating the conditions through which current and future teachers know the readiness standards, give them priority and teach them effectively. The postsecondary sector also needs to coordinate and consult with K-12 to interpret the readiness standards in expected performance levels; this is done through advising on K-12 test construction, teacher professional development, and the specifications for K-12 curriculum and materials.

Postsecondary education must be involved in many of the key steps of the statewide college-readiness agenda, especially placement testing that is based on the specific readiness standards and performance levels adopted statewide.

Specifically, **postsecondary education needs to develop one set of college-readiness standards across all public higher education for use both by K-12 in instruction and by all community colleges and universities in placement decisions.** The alignment of standards, curricula, transitional courses, assessments (both K-12 and postsecondary), and placement in college-level courses is a complex but necessary progression of steps. Removing obstacles to simplify the process wherever possible is essential.

The lack of statewide, common placement standards applied across all of postsecondary education — community and senior colleges and universities — has contributed to the significant underestimation of the percentages and numbers of students not ready for college-level work. In the short term, the establishment of even

higher statewide readiness standards will only increase the percentages of students deemed not ready and in need of remediation.

State Progress

All six *SSCRI* states are exploring the implications of applying the readiness standards statewide for the public postsecondary sector. Most of these efforts have related to the review of standards and placement policies, development of transitional courses, revision of developmental courses and restructuring professional development.

- **Florida's** public two- and four-year colleges partnered with the FLDOE to design senior-year transitional courses in English and mathematics and hold train-the-trainer workshops. To improve placement testing, the Florida College System will develop diagnostic tests aligned with developmental education competencies to identify students' weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics and to customize instruction and course work. Developmental education courses also will be restructured, and each college will offer the same developmental education course sequences.
- **Kentucky's** CPE has worked closely with secondary education on the standards, assessments, transitional courses and professional development. CPE directed funds to each of the public postsecondary institutions to support placement and assessment work. Additionally, the CPE is awarding grants to create academies to support changes in assessment, placement, and/or diagnostic testing and services for students not meeting placement standards. Placement and readiness work teams are creating college-readiness indicators and courses that all institutions will use. The CPE also redesigned the math placement exams for college readiness and college algebra to match the CCSS.
- **Maryland's** postsecondary education and K-12 have collaborated through the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council and the College Success Task Force to advance college readiness; the task force's 2010 report reflects broad-based consensus on ways to improve college readiness. Several readiness partnerships exist locally between K-12 school and district administrators and higher education leaders. However, several issues concerning placement testing are unresolved, particularly around the use of a single statewide higher education placement test and a qualifying score endorsed by all the community colleges.
- In **Texas**, the postsecondary sector has assisted the TEA in redesigning the K-12 assessment system, ensuring that the revised college-readiness standards are reflected in EOC tests and setting appropriate performance levels. The higher education community plans to develop and pilot a college-readiness assessment system with diagnostic and placement capabilities. Legislation provides the commissioner of higher education the option to adopt rules requiring institutions of higher education to adopt uniform standards for

placement of students who do not meet the requirements for college readiness under the advanced EOC tests or other college readiness assessments recognized by the THECB.

- Leaders from **Virginia's** DOE, SCHEV and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) released a joint agreement in 2010 on the performance expectations high school graduates must meet to be successful in freshman-level college courses or career training. The VCCS is redesigning its placement process with new placement and diagnostic components to determine college readiness. The postsecondary institutions assisted the VDOE with development of the capstone courses and the most effective use of placement test data for high school feedback reports.
- The **West Virginia** Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) has taken a proactive role in partnering with WVDE to embrace the CCSS and endorse more rigorous course work in high school. West Virginia is one of only a few states with a statewide standard for assessment and placement into developmental courses, and students are placed in these courses based on their entrance exam scores. WVHEPC procedural rules establish the standards and include assessments in English and mathematics. Use of a single cut score statewide for all public postsecondary institutions is an important aspect of the state's assessment processes, but the array of assessment instruments that institutions can use may complicate the development of transitional courses.

K-12 and Higher Education Accountability

SREB's model agenda calls for accountability from both K-12 and postsecondary education. States should send a clear message through accountability that it is important that all schools and colleges make postsecondary readiness a priority and that increasing percentages of students meet the standards.

As part of the state accountability program, K-12 should be responsible for school and student performance on the college- and career-readiness assessments. Recently, some states have made high school graduation rates an important part of accountability. Some progressive state accountability systems are also reaching for higher-than-minimum achievement levels, such as for the percentages of high school graduates meeting college-readiness standards. In this way, schools are recognized and encouraged to make readiness a priority.

States also need to hold postsecondary education more accountable for the outcomes that should result from a commitment to increasing readiness for postsecondary education; namely, increasing the percentage of entering students who succeed in first-year college courses, or if not, completing successfully remedial work based on the state readiness standards.

School and student performance on college-readiness assessments should be part of the state school and college accountability program to send a clear message that it is important that all schools make college readiness a priority.

State Progress

In some states, lawmakers formally recognize the value and importance of a shared responsibility approach. Legislation enacted in 2008 in Florida, Kentucky and Texas requires that K-12 and postsecondary education each be held responsible for improving readiness either before students leave high school or once they enter college. Virginia has used other policy mechanisms, such as the State Board and a joint agreement among agencies, to address accountability concerns.

- In **Florida**, both K-12 and institutions in the Florida College System are responsible for expanding the college- and career-readiness assessment of high school students. High schools must evaluate the college readiness of all students scoring below certain levels on the state's comprehensive assessment test. Further,

high schools must advise students of deficiencies, provide 12th-grade students with appropriate postsecondary preparatory instruction prior to high school graduation and require them to complete the instruction. The curriculum must include Florida's Postsecondary Readiness Competencies.

- The **Kentucky** Legislature directed K-12 to create a new school accountability system, and in April 2011, the state Board approved a roadmap for developing a next-generation, college- and career-ready accountability system. The CPE must assist the KDE to ensure that content standards in reading and math for introductory college courses are aligned with high school content standards. Legislation also set aggressive goals for CPE to reduce the college remediation rates of recent high school graduates and to increase the college completion rates of students in one or more remedial classes. The CPE and the KDE developed a unified plan to promote college and career readiness and degree completion.
- In **Maryland**, elements of a comprehensive accountability policy for K-12 and higher education are included in the Governor's P-20 College Success Task Force final report. The report suggests a process to develop a growth model of accountability and strategies to create a robust accountability system for college and career readiness, including collaboration between the State Department of Education and MHEC to develop an accountability model that rewards growth in terms of developing and retaining college- and career-ready students.
- **Texas'** new accountability system will emphasize college- and career-ready performance on the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Schools will be responsible for increasing the percentages of students who achieve readiness standards on certain EOCs and helping students in earlier grade levels achieve scores on math and English EOC tests that predict success in subsequent levels of related course work. Legislation in 2011 requires the TEA and THECB to report on college-readiness programs that offer early assessments and interventions. Additionally, the postsecondary sector has new reporting responsibilities related to assessments and placement.
- **Virginia's** links accountability to the Standards of Quality (SOQ) prescribed by the state Board of Education for the state's public schools. The state is identifying additional accountability measures to help schools increase the percentage of students who graduate and demonstrate the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary programs. Students who take capstone classes will be tested through the SOL and required to meet college- and career-readiness cut scores in order to be considered college-ready. The VDOE and VCCS have several teams reviewing K-12 and community college standards to ensure the standards are aligned.
- **West Virginia** has no policy holding the Department of Education and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission accountable for developing and implementing a college- and career-readiness agenda or for its results. The closest legislative directive was in 2007, which holds the WVDE, schools and school districts responsible for student performance with the state's 21st Century Learning initiative, while 2008 legislation addressed state goals and accountability for higher education.

Summary and Observations

Six states — Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia — participated in SREB's *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative*, or *SSCRI*. Each state entered this project at a different stage in its college-readiness work; all made significant progress on most components — some states moving further than others in some areas. The efforts of these states provide several important lessons for others interested in pursuing a statewide college-readiness initiative.

- 1) **There is strong evidence that SREB's model agenda works.** Preliminary results from the states and comments from the external review panel suggest that SREB's model agenda is effective for several reasons:

- a. *Comprehensive* – It encompasses six critical elements of college readiness.
 - b. *Systemic* – All steps of the model agenda connect to the college-readiness standards adopted and shared by K-12 and all of postsecondary education statewide.
 - c. *Functional* – The model agenda provides a straightforward framework to guide the readiness work and check progress against.
 - d. *Flexible* – The model agenda allows states at different points in their readiness work to implement some components without needing to do everything at once, but it is clear that the elements are interrelated, and it is often more effective to work on more than one at a time.
 - e. *Practical* – The components of the model agenda can be developed with or without legislation. To maximize the effect statewide, however, SREB recommends formal policy to ensure consistent implementation and cross-agency, multi-sector, and institutional/district collaboration.
 - f. *Inclusive* – The model agenda requires the active participation of key state leaders and policy-makers, as well as practitioners in the field. The return on investment for strong buy-in and participation of LEAs is significant.
 - g. *Grounded* – The model agenda has been developed and tested now in several states. It is based on earlier work done in California and now draws on experiences in Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.
 - h. *Transparent* – The process is public and allows for constant feedback and revision from teachers in the classroom, district and state agency officials, K-12 and postsecondary sectors, and policy-makers.
- 2) **Improving college/career readiness requires a long-term commitment and is a continuous process.** Changing public policy and behavior is a complex, sensitive process that should be measured in years, not months. Consequently, informing key policy-makers on an ongoing basis is essential; engaging new state leaders in the process is a continuing challenge, but it is critical. This work requires significant change over the long term. Having a visible public figure as a “champion” at the beginning is very helpful, especially in the early stages of the initiative. But the work should extend beyond any one elected official’s term in office and remain a larger statewide priority.
 - 3) **Frequent communicating, monitoring and reporting are essential.** Periodic reporting serves both internal and external assessment needs. Participants and key players need to see progress or understand that delays can occur. Routine updates are important to maintain transparency. Finally, the general public, parents, business leaders and others need to know college readiness is important and that what the state is doing is working.
 - 4) **External fiscal and human resources add value.** External funding can provide critical support that brings this work together. It allows states to draw on their own knowledge and people as well as external experts. For example, in Virginia, one participant noted that “someone was needed to carry the thread of the work throughout multiple agencies — a knowledgeable, collaborative person to keep this work in front of everyone, follow up, coordinate activities across agencies, meet deadlines, serve as a liaison for SREB, etc.” Outside support offered states the opportunity to work across constituent bases, including governor’s offices, legislators, departments of education, higher education agencies, and teachers and faculty. States also had input and involvement from many experts around the nation through initial external interviews, content experts and review panels.
 - 5) **Other environmental events can have significant impact in positive and negative ways.** Political realities can dominate. Guidance and support from external sources are important, but states need to find their own ways to determine how to implement a college-readiness initiative. Multiple “currents” in the policy and education

environment at the state and national levels vie for attention and resources — some currents provide a convenient momentum, while others may lead off course. The magnitude and number of national events (such as emergence of the CCSS and RTTT initiatives and establishment of the assessment consortia), coupled with state budget realities and turnover in leadership at all levels, are inevitable. Taking advantage of rapidly developing events can be very productive. Strong and capable leadership can see the opportunities and capitalize upon them.

The following sections of this report provide in-depth descriptions and details of how each of the six participating states progressed on the individual components of SREB's model agenda to implement a statewide college- and career-readiness initiative.

Chapter 2:

Florida Progress Report on College and Career Readiness

Florida joined SREB's *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)* in 2009. The state Legislature has been instrumental in shaping college readiness in Florida, and in 2009, several state policy and education leaders, together with SREB staff, determined the remaining work in the state. The leadership team in Florida included then-State Commissioner of Education Eric Smith and the chancellors for the Florida College System and the Division of Public Schools—Will Holcombe and Frances Haithcock, respectively. (Haithcock has now left that position.) Also included were former state legislator Joe H. Pickens and several vice chancellors.

Background

Florida's current college-readiness work is heavily influenced by Senate Bill 1908 (2008). This comprehensive legislation required public schools to strengthen students' readiness for college and careers and expand readiness assessments. The bill called for more common placement testing for postsecondary education and extended opportunities for remediation to high school seniors. The legislation has led to cross-sector (secondary and post-secondary) cooperative efforts to expand the college- and career-readiness testing of 11th-grade students who express postsecondary intent, as well as to further collaborative efforts to make postsecondary remediation available to 12th-grade students who demonstrate a need or interest in additional preparation.

The important goals of this law were to: 1) increase the number and percentage of students who graduate from high school "college- and career-ready"; 2) better communicate with 11th-grade students and their parents the requirements and opportunities for enrollment in college-credit courses without remediation; and, 3) provide those students whose test scores in reading, writing and/or mathematics indicate any gaps with an opportunity to attain needed competencies in 12th grade prior to high school graduation. Ultimately, the goals of the legislation were to help graduate better-prepared students, increase access to postsecondary opportunities, enhance career success, and promote student retention and completion in college.

In response to the call for expanded readiness testing, the Florida Department of Education initiated the Expanded Postsecondary Readiness Assessment (ERPA). In 2008, the Florida College System began the additional testing, called the Florida College Entry-Level Placement Test (CPT). The Florida Department of Education developed readiness courses for high school seniors and related end-of-course exams; the state Board of Education approved the courses.

The state considers the expanded assessment and remediation opportunity for high school students a shared responsibility among school districts and community colleges; many of the implementation decisions are made at the local level, including which of the five readiness courses will be made available to students, who will teach the courses, and which classroom materials are used.

Florida was well along with its college- and career-readiness agenda as a result of Senate Bill 1908, so SREB modified its initial interview process and did not prepare a state progress report, as it had with most participating states. SREB now provides this report at the conclusion of the grant to describe where Florida was when the state joined *SSCRI*, summarize interim progress achieved by March 2011 in implementing SREB's model readiness agenda, and make suggestions for future action.

The following sections describe Florida's progress on each of the elements in SREB's readiness agenda and suggest areas the state may want to consider to advance its college- and career-ready goals.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Standards

SREB's college- and career-readiness model is framed on the premise that the same standards and performance expectations should be used by both K-12 and postsecondary education and should connect all steps of the college-readiness agenda. Having one set of readiness standards that are approved and used by K-12 and all public postsecondary institutions (two- and four-year sectors) is vital to sending clear signals to all public high schools about what it means to be college- and career-ready.

Before the passage of Senate Bill 1908, Florida could not point to a specific set of college-readiness standards that were clear in both content and performance expectations and were shared fully by both K-12 and postsecondary education. K-12 was not able to identify a subset of its department-adopted core standards as the recognized set needed to be ready for college-level work, and the postsecondary sector had not established a common set of standards across all public higher education and applied them through a common placement process.

After Senate Bill 1908, the Florida Department of Education began to identify college-readiness standards during the process of broadening college placement testing for high school juniors and seniors. The requirement to expand readiness assessments led to a process of combining and reassessing state standards to create a blueprint of standards that delineate college readiness, as well as standards for a host of specialized mathematics and English courses for students who do not test as ready for college.

In July 2010, Florida officially adopted the CCSS for English/language arts and mathematics and the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards. Florida is also one of the states that has won a RTTT award, which earned the state a \$700 million federal grant to increase student achievement, better prepare more students for college and careers, increase postsecondary education enrollment and close achievement gaps.

K-12 Assessments

SREB's model posits that students should be assessed by methods that measure progress on the state-adopted readiness standards with qualifying scores that equate to the readiness performance levels expected of entering first-year college students. Student assessments at the end of the junior year of high school should measure progress on the state-adopted readiness standards. These assessments should be used to direct students to targeted assistance in 12th grade to remedy deficiencies and certify readiness to begin postsecondary or advanced study. Florida did not have K-12 assessments that rose to the level of college readiness and is taking two routes to develop and use such tests.

First, as part of the U.S. Department of Education's RTTT competition, consortia of states throughout the country are developing a common assessment to be used across states that reflects the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards. Florida is one of 25 states that have created the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The goal of PARCC is to create an assessment system that will help states dramatically increase the number of students who graduate high school ready for college and careers and provide students, parents, teachers and policy-makers with the tools they need to help students — from grade three through high school — stay on track and graduate prepared.

On behalf of PARCC, Florida submitted the PARCC application to the U.S. Department of Education on June 23, 2010. Together, the 26 PARCC states educate more than 60 percent of the public K-12 students in the United

States. Florida is one of 11 governing states that will lead the assessment development effort and serve as PARCC's fiscal agent on behalf of the larger Partnership.

Second, Florida will begin using the actual placement tests applied by Florida's postsecondary education system to assess 11th-graders' college readiness. **In October 2010, the Florida College System launched the new Florida Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (P.E.R.T.) for use by institutions within the Florida College System.** The rollout signified completion of the first phase of P.E.R.T. implementation — the development of the placement test — which will gradually replace the CPT by 2012. The P.E.R.T. is customized and aligned with the Florida Postsecondary Readiness Competencies (PRCs) developed by Florida faculty. The PRCs are comprised of a subset of the nation's new Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards, American Diploma Project Benchmarks and Florida Basic Skills for exit from developmental education. The P.E.R.T. will be the primary placement assessment used by the Florida College System that is available to high school and college students. This test also will allow high school staff to place students in the proper transitional courses in their senior year, possibly preventing students from taking development education courses in college.

Curriculum and Transitional Courses

Ensuring that the school curriculum incorporates and targets the revised readiness standards is a key element in SREB's college-readiness model. The model asserts that the public school curriculum should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, using the standards and performance levels established by the end-of-course assessment aligned with college readiness and mapping back to at least eighth grade. Supplemental curriculum or transitional courses designed to teach and assess the skills needed to succeed in first-year college courses should be available to help students in 12th grade who, based on 11th-grade assessments, are on track to graduate without being college- and career-ready.

As a result of Senate Bill 1908, specialized courses have been implemented in some state high schools that incorporate the same competencies that the colleges have embedded in their developmental education (also known as college-prep) courses to prepare students for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. These courses are targeted to 12th-graders whose placement scores are below the established cut score, indicating that they are not college-ready.

In 2008, the Florida Department of Education released state standards and approved course numbers and descriptions for mathematics and English transitional courses. There were limited course offerings during the 2009-2010 school year, but enrollment increased slightly during 2010-2011. The one-semester, one-half credit elective transitional courses are:

- Mathematics for College Success,
- Reading for College Success, and
- Writing for College Success.

The Florida Department of Education and Florida College System developed additional yearlong, one-credit elective courses — Mathematics for College Readiness and English IV: Florida College Prep — to align with entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. Successful completion of the yearlong courses while in high school will exempt students from further placement testing/postsecondary remediation if they enroll in a community college within two years of completion of the courses. Successful completion requires a grade of C or better in the course and a passing score on the Florida College Basic Skills Exit Test.

The one-half credit elective mathematics course is designed for students scoring below 19 on the ACT, and the full high school mathematics credit class is for students scoring from 19 to 22, or receiving concurrent scores on the

Grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Both of these courses are designed to reflect the curriculum and standards in the two levels of mathematics developmental education courses in the Florida College System. The Mathematics for College Success course reflects the lowest level of developmental education, and completion requires the student to enroll in the highest developmental education class, MAT 1033. Students who take the Mathematics for College Readiness course (which is comparable to MAT 1033) and pass the Florida Basic Skills Exit test receive an elective college credit and can enroll in first-year, college-level mathematics courses.

The English IV: Florida College Prep (FCP) course combines the two electives (reading and writing) as well as the core, required senior-year English class into a yearlong, one high-school credit course. Students test into these courses by scoring similarly on the ACT English test as described above for mathematics, or by receiving concurrent scores on the Grade 10 FCAT.

These courses are designed for students who test below the preparedness level determined by their scores on the SAT or ACT and the Grade 10 FCAT. Students who take one or more of these courses must score high enough on the Florida Basic Skills Exit test or the CPT/P.E.R.T. to register for introductory, credit-bearing college courses.

Much local autonomy is granted by Senate Bill 1908. Each school district can choose which, if any, of these courses are taught in its high schools and who will teach them. Each district also can create its own course descriptions based on the state's recommendations and may choose its own course materials. Each local school district is expected to partner with an area community college for CPT testing and for assistance in teaching the courses and/or professional development.

Teacher Development

The systemic design of SREB's college-readiness model rests on a single, central operating principle: determining what will maximize the conditions in which classroom teachers statewide can best help students be ready for college study. This principle arguably provides the most critical element in pursuing a systemic, connected approach to building a college-readiness initiative. Linking all action steps and decisions about the implementation of a readiness initiative to one criterion — what will motivate and help a classroom teacher to teach to the readiness standards effectively — provides a common, clear thread connecting standards to testing to curriculum to teacher development (both pre-service and in-service) and to school and college accountability.

Effective statewide teacher development plans should focus specifically on the state college-readiness standards, to help teachers understand the specific standards and how to teach them effectively in grades eight through 12. Plans also should address how teachers should implement the new 12th-grade courses or activities designed to bring students up to readiness standards once 11th-grade assessments are reviewed. In addition, teacher preparation programs need to be reviewed and revised as needed to include an emphasis on the core readiness standards, and appropriate adjustments need to be made in relevant teacher licensure and certification state regulations.

The Florida Department of Education developed an action plan for professional development to inform district supervisors, content specialists and others of the CCSS and transitional courses developed in response to Senate Bill 1908. This action plan included offering numerous training workshops across the state on all five of the state transitional courses; participants would then return to their schools and districts to help prepare mathematics and English transitional course teachers.

In summer 2010, the Florida Department of Education, with support from SREB's college-readiness grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, held a dozen train-the-trainer workshops across the state — six for transitional courses in mathematics and six for English. These meetings provided training for district-level principals, guidance counselors and teachers. Faculty members from the Florida College System were invited as well in order

to train high school teachers in their service areas. The meetings were facilitated by local educators and state college faculty who previously had trained teachers on the transitional readiness courses in mathematics, reading and writing.

An additional statewide train-the-trainer workshop for district and school-level personnel was held in late October 2010 on mathematics and English transitional courses. State leaders also are planning to develop online resources for transitional-course teachers and students.

Florida also has proposed to develop a state system of “College Success Academies” — to be formed regionally by fall 2011 — that would give students access to all five of the transitional courses, as well as Advanced Placement, dual enrollment and other college-preparatory curriculum. The proposal is still in the planning stage and is pending based on funding availability and resources. If it is adopted, the Florida Department of Education and the Florida College System will hold a summer 2011 workshop to train teachers for the academies.

Postsecondary Education Application of the Standards

SREB’s readiness agenda emphasizes that the same kind of performance levels on the readiness standards need to be used and applied by both K-12 and all higher education. **In phase two of the P.E.R.T. implementation, the Florida College System will develop diagnostic tests aligned with statewide developmental education competencies established by Florida faculty to accurately identify specific areas of weakness in reading, writing and mathematics.** A diagnostic test will be developed for each level of developmental education in English and mathematics. This will enable faculty to customize instruction and course work to address specific student needs. The objective of this targeted instruction is to increase student progression and graduation rates, effectively shortening time to degree completion and the cost of postsecondary education to both students and the state. These diagnostic measures will be available to the colleges before the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

In the final phase of the project, developmental education courses will be restructured based on the developmental education competencies, and each college will offer the same developmental education course sequences. Prior to this, colleges offered anywhere from one to four levels of developmental education classes, but now each college will offer only two levels. This redesign will address specific areas of weakness in a given subject, and students will be able to build their understanding of specific knowledge areas without the need to take entire courses over again. This also ensures guaranteed course articulation for students who transfer within the developmental education course sequence.

K-12 and Higher Education Accountability

To ensure that the college-readiness initiative is truly statewide, all schools must make college and career readiness a priority, and accountability — for both K-12 and higher education — is central to the success of a college- and career-readiness agenda. Both school and student performance on the college- and career-readiness assessments should be part of the state school accountability program. This sends a clear message that it is important that all schools make postsecondary readiness a priority and that increasing percentages of students meet the standards.

Florida’s college- and career-readiness accountability measures exist primarily within Senate Bill 1908. **The legislation made the Florida Department of Education (both K-12 and higher education) responsible for expanding the college- and career-readiness assessment of high school students** who indicate an interest in postsecondary education, extending remediation opportunities for high school seniors, and doing so by the 2008-2009 school year. However, the legislation provided no accountability for local school districts and high schools to implement these changes.

Florida high schools are not required to offer any of the five transitional courses developed by the state, nor are any students required to take the courses if they are offered. Offering the courses to high school seniors is merely a suggestion to local education authorities, parents and students. Furthermore, until the full statewide implementation of P.E.R.T. and development and implementation of the P.E.R.T. diagnostic in 2013, all students are not taking the comprehensive college-readiness assessments. Along those same lines, professional development for teachers of the transitional courses is recommended, but it is not required. Nor is there any oversight from the Florida Department of Education to ensure that transitional course teachers are receiving training from their local “trainer” who attended the regional or state training sessions in 2010.

SREB suggests that Florida close this gap in accountability by enacting state legislation, regulation or Board of Education rules to require that at least the two, one-credit transitional courses are offered in every public high school, that all students who do not meet the readiness cut score on the P.E.R.T. take the appropriate transitional course(s), and that all teachers receive the proper training to teach these courses. The state might consider developing accountability measures to strengthen the ties between local schools and Florida colleges in implementation of the P.E.R.T., as well as guidance in delivery of the transitional courses, ultimately reducing the number of students who take remediation in the Florida College System.

Summary and Observations

Over the short period of time that Florida has participated in SREB’s college- and career-readiness initiative, the state has taken several essential steps to ensure that all students have a better opportunity to be college- and career-ready when they leave high school. **With the leadership of the state Legislature, passage of Senate Bill 1908 and a strong collaboration between the state K-12 and higher education agencies, Florida has embarked on adopting national college- and career-readiness standards, developing and piloting transitional courses, and delivering teacher development to many state teachers, administrators and college faculty.**

Florida is a national leader on several fronts in education. The state has developed statewide K-12 assessments for college readiness and the first college- and career-readiness assessment and college placement exam based on national standards for college readiness. The state also has one of the most comprehensive and widely used online learning systems, the Florida Virtual School. Using these resources, Florida can greatly expand its college-readiness initiative to become the first fully implemented curriculum, assessment and teacher development initiative available online.

Buy-in from K-12 and higher education as to the value of college and career readiness, as well as a firm commitment to collaboration are two characteristics of Florida’s work that embed college- and career-readiness priorities in the state’s reform agenda. Strong leadership at the state level with a network of local and regional leaders within both K-12 and higher education is critical to form a solid framework to ensure systemic implementation of the college-readiness initiative. Strong state leadership is present in Florida, where the Department of Education and the Florida College System have been very transparent and inclusive in designing and implementing the college- and career-readiness initiative. Numerous instances of local support exist in the pilot and some other regions of the state. A broad-based network of local support would be the next step in solidifying this to become a full, statewide initiative.

Pending 2011 legislation in the Florida Legislature, which if passed, would make transitional English and mathematics courses required for all high school seniors who test as not prepared for college, is an extremely positive plan to sustain the work of the state. Additionally, requiring all necessary students to take these classes would fix the current problem of not all high schools in the state offering transitional courses. This legislation would serve as a crucial vehicle for moving the implementation of the college- and career-ready agenda statewide, as well as sustaining it into the future.

Chapter 3:

Kentucky Progress Report on College and Career Readiness

Kentucky has made significant progress in recent years to address systemic education issues through broad-based reform. The state joined SREB's *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)* in 2008 as part of its reform efforts. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), with support from the office of Governor Steven Beshear and the state Legislature, has been working in collaboration with the postsecondary education sectors — the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) — to design and implement sweeping changes to bring about long-term improvements in the college and career readiness of Kentucky's students.

Kentucky formed a leadership team in late fall 2008, and SREB conducted site visits and interviews in the state in spring 2009. The leadership team received a progress report and presentation in September 2009. That report described the context for existing reform efforts, outlined key issues to be addressed and concluded with a set of specific recommendations. This progress report one and one-half years later describes where Kentucky was when the state joined the SREB college-readiness project, summarizes interim progress achieved by March 2011 in implementing the model agenda and makes suggestions for future action.

Background

From 1990 to 2000, the Kentucky Legislature enacted major reforms in K-12, postsecondary and adult education. While each set of reforms was ambitious, each addressed just one segment of education, and none was specifically aimed at improving students' college readiness. Additional action in 2006 took education reform further:

- The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) approved an increase in high school graduation requirements and approved revised core curriculum standards in literacy and mathematics.
- House Bill 197 established a pilot program in end-of-course testing for Algebra I, Algebra II and geometry.
- Senate Bill 130 required a series of diagnostic assessments to assess high school readiness, beginning in 2008-2009 (in grade eight), college readiness (in grade 10 through the ACT PLAN), and college admissions/placement examinations (using ACT test scores in grade 11).

A significant leap forward occurred in 2009 with the passage of Senate Bill 1, which established a path for Kentucky's implementation of a statewide college-readiness agenda and provided a framework for SREB's Gates college-readiness project. This legislation had the potential to break through key areas of impasse that had stalled reforms in recent years. It established one of the best general outlines of a statewide college-readiness initiative in the nation. By locating coordination of the SREB project within the offices of the Governor and the Secretary of Education and Workforce Development, the state provided visible, high-level support.

Selected findings from SREB's September 2009 progress report to the Kentucky leadership team are a benchmark for understanding how the state has moved forward and where it stands today. In brief:

- Senate Bill 1 marked a major step forward in that it has the potential to break through key areas of impasse that stalled earlier reforms. SREB found a great deal of optimism about the content of Senate Bill 1 but some skepticism about the capacity to *implement* the new legislation. Implementing the agenda effectively depends on resolving and building statewide consensus and common understanding on these issues.

- Effective implementation of a statewide college-readiness initiative requires strong state-level and statewide leadership, both within K-12 and postsecondary education individually, and then across both segments. This will be a challenge in Kentucky, with its history of strong institutional autonomy.
- In postsecondary education, SREB found that the CPE president and his staff were committed to this initiative and the challenge. Yet SREB staff were somewhat concerned about the involvement at that point of the KCTCS. This sector needs to play a central leadership role in the implementation of Senate Bill 1 and the further development of all components of Kentucky's college- and career-readiness initiative.
- In K-12, SREB found a strong commitment and understanding, especially from the new commissioner. CPE leadership also embraced the readiness initiative and recognized the challenge of coordinating the individual campus responses to the priority.

The following sections describe Kentucky's progress on each of the elements in SREB's readiness agenda and suggest areas the state may want to consider to advance its college- and career-ready goals.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Standards

SREB's college- and career-readiness model is framed on the premise that the same standards and performance expectations should be used by both K-12 and postsecondary education and should connect all steps of the college-readiness agenda. Having one set of readiness standards that are approved and used by K-12 and all public postsecondary institutions (two- year and four-year sectors) is vital to sending clear signals to all public high schools about what it means to be college- and career-ready.

Before initiating its current statewide college- and career-readiness direction, Kentucky could not point to a specific set of college-readiness standards that were clear in content and performance expectations and were shared fully by both K-12 and postsecondary education. K-12 was not able to identify a subset of its Board of Education-adopted core standards as the recognized set needed to be ready for college-level work, and the postsecondary sector had not established a common set of standards across all public higher education and applied them through a common placement process.

That changed with Senate Bill 1, a comprehensive piece of legislation designed to bring about immediate and far-reaching changes to achieve college- and career-readiness goals. Its centerpiece was the mandate to align the revised academic standards from elementary through postsecondary education, so that students could be successful at each level — a mandate that met SREB's readiness criteria for statewide standards. Policy-makers wanted fewer but more in-depth standards to facilitate mastery learning. The bill's aggressive timeline called for completion of the standards revision process in mathematics by early 2010 and in English/language arts by December 2010.

In February 2010 — in a bold move to establish high-level common standards — Kentucky became the first state in the nation to accept the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and integrate them into the public education system to meet the mandate of Senate Bill 1 and support its college-readiness reform efforts. In a joint meeting, the KBE, the CPE and the Education Professional Standards Board formally directed their agencies to implement the CCSS in English/language arts and mathematics and to begin integrating the standards into the state's curriculum guidelines, teacher preparation programs and higher education activities. The content standards for English/language arts and mathematics were finalized in June 2010. Teachers will begin to provide instruction related to the standards in fall 2011. The standards now form the basis of a new state testing system that will be implemented in 2011-2012. Students will be assessed on the CCSS beginning in spring 2012.

Although many states anticipate full implementation of the standards no earlier than 2013 (Center on Education Policy, 2011), Kentucky moved swiftly and efficiently to meet the fall 2011 legislative deadline. In concert with the model agenda promoted by SREB, the KDE convened teams of K-12 teachers and administrators, higher educa-

tion faculty and others to crosswalk the state's standards and the CCSS, determine areas of agreement as well as disagreement, and reach consensus on which standards would be the revised state standards.

K-12 Assessments

SREB's model posits that students should be assessed by methods that measure progress on the state-adopted readiness standards with qualifying scores that equate to the readiness performance levels expected for first-year college students to succeed academically. Student assessments at the end of the junior year of high school can measure progress on the state-adopted readiness standards and can be used to direct students to targeted assistance in the 12th grade to remedy deficiencies or to certify readiness to begin postsecondary or advance study immediately.

Several years ago by legislation, Kentucky established a 10th-grade readiness test and the 11th-grade ACT as vehicles to test for readiness, as well as to provide a national normative basis against which to compare Kentucky for student performance and state standards. It was recognized at the time that Kentucky's criterion-based and school accountability assessments did not focus directly on student performance on specifically identified college-readiness school standards.

Legislation has paved the way for end-of-course assessments: In 2006, the General Assembly established a pilot program in end-of-course testing for Algebra I, Algebra II and geometry (House Bill 197) and required a series of diagnostic assessments using the ACT Educational Progress Assessment System. Senate Bill 1 continued these assessments related to college and career readiness, including:

1. a high school readiness examination to assess English, reading, mathematics and science in grade eight.
2. a college-readiness examination to assess English, reading, mathematics and science in grade 10 (ACT PLAN).
3. the ACT college admissions and placement examination to assess English, reading, mathematics and science, to be taken by all students in grade 11.
4. any other component necessary to comply with the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

In its 2009 progress report, SREB supported end-of-course (EOC) testing and suggested that Kentucky consider developing a limited number of EOC tests, especially in English III and Algebra II, to directly assess student achievement of the specific state-identified college-readiness standards. The Algebra II and English III tests would provide the anchor assessments for the postsecondary-readiness standards and a basis for back-mapping the standards to earlier course work. The ACT results would continue to be used for the above purposes and also as a general benchmark to ensure the alignment of Kentucky standards and student performance over time.

Senate Bill 1 in 2009 called for Kentucky state standards that rise to postsecondary-readiness levels. This bill maintained the reliance on the ACT and 10th-grade testing to assess readiness for postsecondary education. However, this legislation also recognized the use of criterion-based tests in high school to assess student performance on the specific state-adopted standards.

In this light, **Kentucky is pursuing the development of EOC testing, including for courses that include the specific college-readiness standards in reading, writing and math.** To this end, Kentucky joined 24 other states in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). PARCC is creating an assessment system anchored in college and career readiness and aligned to the CCSS and supporting tools. The assessments will be given to students in participating states in school year 2014-2015. A related goal of the new assessment regimen is to generate longitudinal data on student performance as a basis for providing feedback to students and teachers about any deficiencies in meeting standards.

Curriculum and Transitional Courses

Ensuring that the school curriculum incorporates and targets the revised readiness standards is a key element in SREB's college-readiness model. The model asserts that the public school curriculum should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, mapping back to at least eighth grade. Supplemental curriculum or transitional courses designed to teach and assess the skills needed to succeed in first-year college courses should be available to help students in 12th grade who, based on 11th-grade assessments, are on track to graduate without being college- and career-ready.

Senate Bill 1 required schools to provide a transitional course or monitored intervention to every student not meeting college-readiness benchmarks in English/language arts or math. This is one of the key strategies set out in the Unified Strategy for College and Career Readiness plan, with goals set for all Kentucky secondary schools to have a fully operational intervention system by May 2011 and for all students to have access to online credit recovery courses for high school graduation requirements by August 2014.

To develop new transitional courses, KDE assembled statewide teams of secondary and postsecondary educators to assist regional school districts and high schools in designing and implementing transitional math and reading courses. Meetings of the state teams in 2010 produced college-readiness transition courses that center on a framework of content and concepts aligned with the revised Kentucky Core Academic Standards and with college- and career-readiness standards. The target audience is high school seniors who scored just below readiness benchmarks on the ACT of 16, 17 or 18 in math and/or 17, 18 or 19 in reading.

The math and reading courses were launched in September 2010 and can be adapted to meet the specific needs and conditions in each high school. They may be offered as an actual full semester course or as an intervention for students before or after school, as a supplement to existing math courses or a course in which students have flexible entry and exit based on pre-assessment scores. The flexibility of the course is designed to provide schools with multiple options to meet student needs without compromising the other opportunities available to them.

To better understand how teachers are responding to the transitional courses and to gather some initial information on the effectiveness of the courses, KDE held three regional meetings in early 2011 for teachers who had used (or were currently using) the transitional courses and those who planned to teach them. These activities are part of a formative evaluation plan that KDE is designing to ensure program integrity and adequacy through continuous review and revision.

Teacher Development

The systemic design of SREB's college-readiness model rests on a single, central operating principle: determining what will maximize the conditions in which classroom teachers statewide can best prepare students for college study. Linking all action steps and decisions about the implementation of a readiness initiative to this one criterion is the most effective way to connect standards to testing to curriculum to teacher development (both pre-service and in-service) and to school and college accountability.

Effective statewide teacher development plans should focus specifically on helping teachers understand the specific college-readiness standards and how to teach them effectively in grades eight through 12. Plans also should address how teachers should implement the new 12th-grade courses or activities designed to bring students up to readiness standards once 11th-grade assessments are reviewed. In addition, pre-service teacher preparation programs should be reviewed and revised as needed to include an emphasis on the core readiness standards. Appropriately reinforcing adjustments need to be made in relevant teacher licensure and certification state regulations.

Teacher development holds an essential position in implementing Kentucky's "Next Generation" accountability goals. Provisions of Senate Bill 1 address both aspects of teacher development: in-service professional development and pre-service teacher preparation. The KDE and the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) are charged with integrating new standards into teacher training and professional development. The KDE must disseminate standards to teacher training programs and ensure that the standards communicate expectations clearly and concisely to teachers so as to affect classroom instruction. Additionally, the KDE must provide for statewide teacher in-service training about the standards, and the EPSB must provide training on new standards in all teacher preparation programs.

In 2010, the agencies developed a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the commitments of the KDE with the local school districts and of the CPE with the institutions of higher education. This document **calls on the agencies to act upon the statutory requirements of Senate Bill 1 concerning professional development to support the newly revised content standards.** The department has information posted on numerous Web pages and is planning to create a podcast and webinar for Kentucky educators related to the transitional courses.

Professional development is an important part of the CPE's plans and is covered in both the Memorandum of Understanding and the *Unified Strategy for College and Career Readiness* plan. For example, a goal for postsecondary institutions is for all developmental education, College of Education, and College of Arts and Sciences faculties to have access to training on the Kentucky Core Academic Standards by 2011. The CPE has taken action to encourage and support professional development of postsecondary faculty on the new content standards and to ensure that future teachers are equipped to work with the new content standards. The General Assembly appropriated funds in the 2010-2012 budget for the CPE to implement Senate Bill 1, with funds specified for the professional development of postsecondary faculty instructing teacher preparation students in Colleges of Education and content faculty, particularly in the arts and sciences. The majority of the state funds are going to the eight state universities and to KCTCS as grants to meet the professional development needs at the individual institutions.

Additionally:

- With assessment and placement monies awarded to the CPE, it has provided each of the 24 public postsecondary campuses with a \$25,000 noncompetitive grant to support its placement and assessment work.
- Additionally, the CPE is awarding three \$200,000 competitive grants to create assessment and placement academies across the state; initiatives and activities at the academies include assessment, placement, and/or diagnostic testing and services for high school, adult education, or entering students not meeting the system-wide standards of placement. Each academy must include at least two public universities, a community and technical college, an adult education program and a local school district.
- The CPE has convened placement and readiness work teams to create college-readiness indicators that all postsecondary institutions will use, including common placement assessments and cut scores; common learning outcomes for developmental, transitional, or supplemental course work; and courses that meet the common learning outcomes. This allows for a common group of metrics using both ACT and placement scores for readiness for credit-bearing college courses without need of remediation. The CPE also has redesigned the math placement exams for college readiness and college algebra to match the CCSS. These online exams will be free and available to use in the high school transitional courses and for placement and assessment for college readiness.
- For professional development, the CPE is considering creating a college-readiness center at a university to ensure that professional development will continue around content standards currently adopted and those which will be adopted for use in the near future. The KDE and CPE are in the final stages of creating an online high school English transitional course and an advising toolkit that will be available in fall 2011.

- The CPE funded and developed five content modules for postsecondary faculty.
- It also awarded \$1.26 million in federal grant funding from the Improving Educator Quality State Grant Program to nine education partnerships to provide professional development for more than 300 P-12 teachers and administrators in 50 school districts over an 18-month period, which began in January 2011. Each partnership is comprised of a postsecondary institution's School of Arts and Sciences and its teacher preparation program, as well as at least one high-need local district.

Classroom teachers are moved most by one set of a limited number of specific standards about which they understand the level of performance required. Moreover, teachers give highest priority to those standards if they are adopted by the state as the target standards, applied by state assessments and reinforced by the state school accountability system. Kentucky's education agencies and professional board have begun the process of linking the standards, assessments and accountability in pre- and in-service teacher development.

Postsecondary Education Application of the Standards

The postsecondary sector also has an important role in Kentucky's college- and career-readiness agenda. Under Senate Bill 1, the president of the CPE is charged, along with the commissioner of education, with ensuring that academic standards recommended to the state Board of Education are aligned with postsecondary course and assessment standards for reading and math. Additionally, the new law called for the standards revision process to involve postsecondary faculty. Higher education in Kentucky has been an active and committed partner with K-12 in the college- and career-readiness work and has led efforts to ensure that postsecondary placement assessments reflect the new readiness standards.

An important related issue is placement testing for higher education. Implementation of a single placement test with a cut score high enough to predict success in college-level course work is highly recommended in SREB's model agenda. Historically, Kentucky colleges and universities individually selected the placement tests and the cut scores they would use. In 2004 the CPE directed Kentucky's public institutions to develop a consistent statewide placement policy that would guarantee placement into credit-bearing course work in English and math to incoming students who demonstrated readiness for college. The resulting Statewide Public Postsecondary Placement Policy released that year used a consistent set of ACT scores as the basis for determining which incoming students would be placed directly in credit-bearing courses and which could be placed in remedial courses at the discretion of the admitting institutions. The placement policy holds the state's public postsecondary institutions responsible for providing supplemental academic assistance to any underprepared student admitted. It will be important that the standards and qualifying scores used for the 11th-grade readiness assessments are aligned with the postsecondary placement testing.

Placement exams and assessments currently are being aligned across the public postsecondary institutions. A framework of indicators that guarantee entry into college credit-bearing courses using ACT, SAT and placement scores is complete. Students meeting the benchmarks for readiness will be guaranteed placement in credit-bearing courses, without need of remediation. The KDE is providing free COMPASS testing for students not meeting readiness benchmarks who complete intervention programming in high school. The CPE provides free online placement assessments to all entering college students, including those entering from adult education or participating in high school transitional courses.

Learning outcomes for developmental and supplemental courses are being aligned to the common core college- and career-readiness standards. Students successfully completing these courses will be guaranteed entry into credit-bearing courses at all Kentucky public postsecondary institutions.

K-12 and Higher Education Accountability

To ensure that the college-readiness initiative is truly statewide, all schools must make college and career readiness a priority, and accountability — for both K-12 and higher education — is central to success. Kentucky’s education policy incorporates accountability, and the state education agencies provide multiple examples of actions to carry out the accountability mandate.

- The KDE has incorporated reporting on the implementation of Senate Bill 1 into its “Open House” website (<http://openhouse.education.ky.gov>) with a section titled “Readiness for College/Career.”
- It released the first *College and Career Readiness Report* in late September 2010, with data on key metrics to measure progress.
- A system of Leadership Networks helps build the capacity of each district to implement the new Core Academic Standards and develop assessment literacy among all educators.

Senate Bill 1 provided a three-year interim period; the new accountability system will begin in 2011-2012. **The KDE and the state Board have made notable progress on creating a new accountability system.** During a special study session in December 2010, the state Board discussed and adopted a white paper titled “Goals and Guiding Principles for Accountability in Kentucky’s Public Education System,” which establishes the roadmap for developing a next-generation, college- and career-ready accountability system designed to achieve the goals and principles identified within the paper. The Board also reviewed an assessment/accountability model and indicators proposed by the KDE, organized around the Board’s four strategic priorities: next-generation learners, next-generation professionals, next-generation support systems and next-generation schools/districts. The Board plans to give final approval of the model at its April 2011 meeting.

While the KDE shoulders major responsibility for implementing Senate Bill 1, the postsecondary education sector also has significant responsibility. The CPE must assist the KDE, the state Board of Education and postsecondary institutions to ensure that content standards in reading and math for introductory college courses are aligned with high school content standards. The CPE and several faculty assisted in the analysis of the CCSS against the existing standards.

The CPE and the postsecondary institutions carry significant accountability concerning remediation: They must reduce college remediation rates and increase college completion rates of students needing remediation. Senate Bill 1 contained very aggressive goals that charged the CPE, the state Board of Education and the KDE to develop a unified strategy to reduce the college remediation rates of recent high school graduates by at least 50 percent by 2014 from the rates in 2010, and to increase the college completion rates of students enrolled in one or more remedial classes by 3 percent annually from 2009 to 2014. The CPE and the KDE developed a unified plan with strategies to promote college and career readiness and degree completion through:

1. Accelerated Learning Opportunities (expansion of AP/IB access and dual credit opportunities).
2. Secondary Intervention Programs (development of transitional course work).
3. College and Career Readiness Advising (full implementation of the Individual Learning Plan and comprehensive advising programs).
4. Postsecondary College Persistence and Degree Completion (bridge programming, accelerated learning opportunities, and student support and intervention systems). (See <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Secondary+and+Virtual+Learning/College+and+Career+Readiness+Unified+Plan.htm>.)

The CPE and the KDE created cross-agency work teams that include KCTCS, four-year institutions and other external agency partners. These work teams have developed goals and action plans, identified useful resources, and determined expected outcome measures for each of the strategies promoting readiness and degree completion. The teams also developed metrics to measure progress on each of the bill's goals. The agencies will partner with secondary and postsecondary institutions to implement the plan, with dates of implementation contingent upon available funding.

The CPE must monitor and report remediation rates in postsecondary institutions regarding the goals specified in Senate Bill 1. The Unified Strategy for College and Career Readiness plan lays out several metrics developed by the work teams that are being used to monitor progress on the goals. (See http://www.education.ky.gov/NR/ronlyres/BB55028E-F301-499B-9632-09EEC8D05100/0/CCRUnifiedPlan_draft.pdf.)

Summary and Observations

Over the short period of approximately two years, Kentucky has taken college and career readiness from an idea to a statewide education reform initiative. Driven in part by strong, comprehensive legislation and in part by new leadership in key education agencies, Kentucky has made dramatic progress in implementing a college-readiness agenda.

Kentucky also demonstrates four key indicators of a successful initiative: 1) a clear action agenda with specific steps; 2) this agenda spelled out in state policy; 3) clear responsibilities designated; and 4) support in implementation. Broad-based buy-in to the value of college and career readiness and a firm commitment to collaboration are characteristics of Kentucky's work to embed college and career readiness in the state's reform agenda. Strong leadership at the state level, undergirded by a network of local and regional leaders within both K-12 and higher education, is critical to forming a solid framework that ensures systemic implementation of the readiness initiative. Both are evident in Kentucky, where the KDE and the CPE have been very transparent and inclusive in designing and implementing the college- and career-ready initiative.

Kentucky was ready to commit to improving opportunity for all its students; passage of Senate Bill 1 in 2009 set a path to implement a statewide college-readiness agenda and addressed the cornerstone of the SREB model readiness agenda in its call for the revision of core content standards through a collaborative process between K-12 and postsecondary education.

From the revision of content standards to assessments, accountability, curriculum and teacher development, Kentucky has led the region — and, possibly, the nation — in embracing and achieving dramatic results in increasing college and career readiness.

Chapter 4:

Maryland Progress Report on College and Career Readiness

Maryland has long been a national leader in policy areas related to college and career readiness. For example, in 2009 Maryland achieved a grade of A- — the highest grade among all states — for its work on helping students transition through the education pipeline, according to *Education Week's* annual *Quality Counts* report. Additionally in 2002, Achieve Inc. recognized Maryland among a few states in the nation that made the furthest progress in raising academic standards and student achievement. While these recognitions were important, state leaders and those in school districts and postsecondary education institutions realized more needed to be done. Based on school-reform efforts led by State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick, Maryland began to address college and career readiness on several fronts before joining SREB's *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)* in 2009.

SREB provides this report at the conclusion of the grant to describe where Maryland was when the state joined the initiative, summarizes interim progress achieved by March 2011 in implementing the model agenda, and makes suggestions for future action.

Background

Unlike a few other states in *SSCRI*, Maryland did not have significant new legislation on college readiness. However, the state found strong support for addressing college and career readiness from Governor Martin O'Malley and his P-20 Leadership Council. SREB's work was conducted under the auspices of the Council's P-20 College Success Task Force, co-chaired by Superintendent Grasmick and Secretary of Higher Education James Lyons. The task force was charged "to examine current Maryland policies and practices related to the alignment of public secondary and postsecondary expectations, standards, and student learning outcomes; [and] identify gaps between standards for high school exit and college entrance, identify national benchmark educational achievement standards, and make recommendations for appropriate governing boards." The task force also was asked to identify strategies for college success and to define "college readiness."

Initial interviews with task force members and individuals at state and local levels indicated the state had a "window of opportunity" for significant progress in ensuring more students are college- and career-ready when they graduate from high school. In September 2009, SREB provided the P-20 College Success Task Force with a progress report, including findings in specific areas of the SREB model agenda for improving college readiness. SREB noted the positive environment for advancing the college-readiness agenda and the opportunity to solidify a commitment to a systemic and comprehensive, statewide postsecondary education readiness effort similar to SREB's model agenda. This work would include:

- Specifying the college standards and integrating them with the state's core K-12 standards.
- Testing students early in high school to determine their levels of college and career readiness.
- Designing a teacher development plan to ensure that teachers understand the standards and how to teach them.
- Designing transitional courses to help students who are not ready for college or career training in mathematics and English language arts to remediate their weaknesses during the senior year of high school.
- Building a school accountability system that emphasizes college readiness.

In May 2010, the P-20 College Success Task Force submitted a final report (P-20 report) on its work to Governor O'Malley and the P-20 Council. The report incorporated many of the suggestions in SREB's progress report and made eight recommendations, with specific groups named as responsible for each recommendation. The P-20 Council has had a cohesive effect in bringing various sectors together to develop the statewide readiness initiative. And, the effort of the College Success Task Force to define college readiness and lead the work on the SREB project provides a common platform for moving forward on several fronts.

The P-20 report recommendations include:

- 1. Change curricula and high school graduation requirements to meet higher standards:** Adopt the Common Core Standards and create P-20 discipline-based groups to back-map pre-K-12 curricula from college-ready standards; change high school graduation requirements so students must earn at least one credit of mathematics in each year of high school, to include study at least through Algebra 2; regularly convene P-20 State and local alignment groups; increase the number of career and technology education program completers who are also college-ready. *Responsibility: Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE), local school boards and districts, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), colleges, governing boards*
- 2. Identify and adopt college/career-readiness assessments to be used statewide:** Use Maryland P-20 discipline-based groups to identify assessments and college-readiness performance levels for language arts and mathematics; administer benchmark assessments throughout students' school careers; and administer college-readiness tests to all students no later than 11th grade as part of that coherent sequence of measures to keep students on track for graduating from high school ready for college and career training. *Responsibility: MSBE, MSDE, MHEC, General Assembly, governor, colleges and their governing boards*
- 3. Adopt diploma endorsements for college/career-readiness:** Identify on their diplomas students who achieve basic college readiness (reading, writing, mathematics) and those who are college-ready for STEM majors; work on a communications strategy that (1) describes the rationale for endorsements; (2) provides guidance to students seeking endorsements; and (3) honors other choices. *Responsibility: MSBE, MSDE, MHEC, local school districts, institutions of higher education*
- 4. Rethink how schools and colleges deliver education:** Prioritize and expand supplemental education, including such efforts as transition courses, bridge programs, and learning communities; provide more flexibility to differentiate instruction and pathways; explore ways to reshape or extend school calendars; expand access to early college options (e.g., dual or parallel enrollment, AP, IB); redesign courses; strengthen early childhood learning; use technology more effectively. *Responsibility: MSDE, MSBE, MHEC, institutions of higher education and their governing boards, local school boards and school districts, Governor's Office, General Assembly, MD Lumina State Grant Leadership Team*
- 5. Develop a statewide system of support to increase college and career success:** Pre-K-12 schools and colleges need more systemic supports so all students receive needed guidance; ensure each student has an individual plan for pathways/completion in pre-K-12 and higher education; expand programs for diversity and for first-generation and low-income college students; communicate to all students and families about available supports. *Responsibility: MHEC, MSDE, higher education institutions and their governing boards, local school systems and schools, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), Maryland Business Round Table for Education (MBRT)*
- 6. Make changes to teacher preparation and professional development:** Adapt teacher preparation and professional development so, as support to higher education allows, P-20 partnerships can expand professional development networks and involve higher education in teacher development to the Advanced Professional Certificate; have a statewide professional development plan to support a college-/career-ready curriculum. *Responsibility: MSDE, MHEC, institutions of higher education, local school systems*

7. **Communicate more effectively about college readiness and financial assistance for college:** Greatly enhance statewide efforts to inform low-income and first-generation-college families of what students need to do to be college-ready and how to apply for financial aid; expand communications about saving for college and about how much aid can be provided by the state's Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards (FARMS-eligible students are entitled to an award that covers expenses at a public two- or four-year college); expand guidance and mentoring; colleges should clearly post minimum admission requirements and information about students accepted. *Responsibility: General Assembly, Governor, MHEC, MSDE, Maryland Public Television, higher education institutions, local school systems, PTA, MBRT, community organizations*
8. **Make high schools and colleges accountable for college/career-ready graduates:** Make high schools accountable for graduating more students prepared for college and careers, and hold colleges accountable for students succeeding in gateway courses; develop an accountability model with a growth component so improvement is rewarded. *Responsibility: MSDE, MHEC, institutions of higher education and their governing boards.*

The following sections describe Maryland's progress on each of the elements in SREB's readiness agenda and suggest areas the state may want to consider to advance its college- and career-ready goals.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Standards

SREB's college- and career-readiness model agenda is framed on the premise that the same standards and performance expectations should be used by both K-12 and postsecondary education and connect all steps of the college-readiness agenda. Having one set of readiness standards that are approved and used by K-12 and all public postsecondary institutions (two-year and four-year sectors) is vital to sending clear signals to all public high schools about what it means to be college- and career-ready.

As the state focused its attention on the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative and competing for a federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant early in 2010**, the direct work as part of the SREB comprehensive college- and career-readiness agenda was delayed. However, collaboration between K-12 and higher education to provide a single definition of readiness in the state is paving the way for a joint discussion and identification between K-12 and higher education. This reflects step one in the SREB model agenda, as well as the first recommendation from the P-20 report. A major assist in this work was the state's adoption of the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards in June 2010. The state also is taking those standards and developing Common Core State Curriculum Frameworks in English/language arts and mathematics in conjunction with the higher education community in Maryland. For more information on the Curriculum Frameworks, see: <http://mdk12.org/instruction/commoncore/index.html>.

K-12 Assessments

SREB's readiness model argues that students should be assessed by methods that measure progress on the state-adopted college- and career-readiness standards with qualifying scores that equate to the readiness performance levels expected of entering college students. Student assessments at the end of the junior year of high school should measure progress on the state-adopted readiness standards. These assessments should be used to direct students to targeted assistance in 12th grade to remedy deficiencies and certify readiness to begin postsecondary or advance study. SREB favors a single score that powerfully predicts success in college and career, but a second, lower qualifying score may be needed if different levels of proficiency are expected for high school graduation compared to college and career readiness.

As part of the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top (RTTT) competition, consortia of states throughout the country are developing a common assessment to be used across states that reflects the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards. **Maryland is one of 25 states that have created the Partnership for**

Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The goal of PARCC is to create an assessment system that will help states dramatically increase the number of students who graduate high school ready for college and careers and provide students, parents, teachers and policy-makers with the tools they need to help students — from grade three through high school — stay on track and graduate prepared. Maryland is one of 11 governing states who will be leading the assessment development effort on behalf of the larger partnership.

Curriculum and Transitional Courses

Ensuring that the school curriculum incorporates and targets the revised readiness standards is a key element in SREB's readiness model. The model asserts that the public school curriculum should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, using the standards and performance levels established by the end-of-course assessment aligned with college readiness and mapping back to at least grade eight. Supplemental curriculum or transitional courses designed to teach and assess the skills needed to succeed in first-year college courses should be available to help students in 12th grade who, based on 11th-grade assessments, are on track to graduate without being college- and career-ready.

The Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) has decided not to focus specifically on developing and implementing transitional courses until after the state has fully implemented the Common Core Curriculum Frameworks and implemented a nationally accepted Common Core assessment. The idea is that such transitional courses will be based on the Common Core College and Career Readiness Standards and will reflect the direction of the national assessments on readiness currently being developed by the national assessment consortia, with the goal of connecting performance on the national assessment with enrollment in transitional courses. MSDE plans to begin developing transitional courses for all high school students, not just seniors, in 2014, after the National Assessment Consortia's goal date for final CCSS-based assessments. Transitional course plans are only being lightly discussed by the state, and successful local collaborations to provide transitional courses between public high schools and community colleges are being examined.

SREB views the efforts of CCSS curriculum development and transitional course development to be simultaneous. The **state does not need to wait** for national CCSS assessments to begin developing transitional curriculum, as it can do so based on the already adopted CCSS, just as it is doing for the Curriculum Frameworks. Underprepared students could benefit from transitional courses far earlier than 2014, and the courses could and should be adjusted over the years based on student performance on state and national assessments. Once completed, this work would address key components of SREB's college-readiness agenda, as well as the fourth recommendation from the P-20 report.

Teacher Development

What will maximize the conditions in which classroom teachers statewide can best help students be ready for college study? The answer arguably provides the most critical element in pursuing a systemic, connected approach to building a college-readiness initiative. Linking all actions and decisions to what will motivate and help a classroom teacher to use the readiness standards in instruction provides a common, clear thread connecting standards to testing to curriculum to teacher development (both pre-service and in-service) and to school and college accountability.

Effective statewide teacher development plans should focus specifically on the state college-readiness standards, to help teachers understand the specific college-readiness standards and how to teach them effectively in grades eight through 12. Plans should also address how teachers should implement the new 12th-grade courses or activities designed to bring students up to readiness standards once 11th-grade assessments are reviewed. In addition, teacher preparation programs need to be reviewed and revised as needed to include an emphasis on the core readiness standards and appropriate adjustments need to be made in relevant teacher licensure and certification state regulations.

Maryland has been a leader in professional development since the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act (2002) restructured elementary and secondary education finance so that the Department of Education could make sound investments in teacher development. The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council was convened by the state superintendent in 2003 and initially charged with examining teacher professional development policies and programs at state and local levels, setting standards for high-quality professional development and offering suggestions for improving professional development. The council has since developed a set of standards for teacher professional development, assessed the implementation of these standards, developed a guide for using these standards (*The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Planning Guide*, 2008), and reported on other aspects of evaluating and ensuring high-quality professional development. The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council is part of the Maryland State Department of Education and exists outside of any legislation.

Maryland State Department of Education officials, with RTTT funds, are now in the process of providing professional development to educators on the CCSS and the Maryland Common Core Curriculum Frameworks.

The state is setting up 11 “Educator Effectiveness Academies” to take place during summer 2011 to directly train more than 6,000 educators. Every school in the state will send a team of four people (a principal, and one English/language arts, one mathematics and one STEM educator) to these academies. They will return to their schools with a plan for delivering that content to every teacher in their school, indirectly training over 60,000 educators by the end of the 2011-2012 school year. The state plans additional professional development for the CCSS and the upcoming Common Core assessments over the next three years. Maryland is no doubt at the forefront of teacher development for the CCSS.

Postsecondary Education Application of the Standards

A number of successful collaborations are in place locally around college-readiness concerns, with frequent meetings between K-12 school and district administrators and higher education leaders. For example, community colleges and local school districts plan to give college placement exams to high school juniors and seniors. The state education agencies should take these examples of local collaborations and programs to help them develop appropriate end-of-course tests in mathematics and English that assess a student’s true preparedness level for college and a career, as well as delivery of college-readiness curriculum linked to these assessments. This work would reflect step two in the SREB model agenda, as well as the second recommendation from the P-20 report.

It is important to note, however, that Maryland does not have a single state agency that oversees the work of all community colleges, as most states do. This creates some added difficulty in creating a statewide higher education placement test that will be endorsed by all of the community colleges. The Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Higher Education Commission will need to tap into local K-12 and higher education partnerships for direction on best practices and implementation statewide of higher education placement tests used in direct connection as assessments to denote the success of college-readiness curriculum.

K-12 and Higher Education Accountability

To ensure that the initiative is truly statewide, all schools must make college and career readiness a priority, and accountability — for both K-12 and higher education — is central to the success of a college- and career-readiness agenda. Both school and student performance on the college- and career-readiness assessments should be part of the state school accountability program. This sends a clear message that it is important that all schools make post-secondary readiness a priority and that increasing percentages of students meet the standards.

Distinct elements suitable for a comprehensive accountability policy for K-12 and higher education are present in the Governor’s P-20 College Success Task Force final report. They coordinate fully with SREB’s fifth and sixth steps in the model agenda. The eighth and final recommendation from the P-20 report leads to the heart of the accountability issue. The report further states that three strategies should be employed to create a robust accountability system for college and career readiness:

1. The Maryland State Department of Education and Maryland Higher Education Commission, working with their district and segment partners, as well as other parties as appropriate, should convene P-20 technical experts to develop an accountability model that rewards growth in terms of developing and retaining college- and career-ready students.
2. The accountability model should be developed prior to the administration of statewide college- and career-ready assessments.
3. The process of developing a growth model of accountability should also involve consideration of some elements of performance other than growth.

SREB recommends that the state work to complete a college- and career-ready assessment plan, curriculum and a teacher development plan; establish any support structures needed during this work; and lastly enact the aforementioned strategies to set accountability measures for K-12 and higher education. With these combined efforts, Maryland will have employed a comprehensive college- and career-readiness initiative statewide.

Summary and Observations

Maryland has led the nation for several years in many aspects of education, from student performance, to teacher development, and local partnerships for educational excellence.

However, much work remains in establishing a comprehensive, statewide college-readiness initiative in Maryland. While the Governor’s P-20 College Success Task Force was able to release a comprehensive report full of information, goals and targets for the state’s college- and career-readiness initiative, the state has not yet acted on SREB’s main goal of developing high school transitional courses and professional development on those courses. Maryland education leaders should work to fulfill their own set goals and targets from the P-20 College Success Task Force report and the individualized suggestions given in the Maryland Progress Report prepared by SREB, to develop transitional courses, the hallmark of a comprehensive college- and career-readiness initiative. But just as is stated in the P-20 report, “The extent to which these recommendations can be implemented depends on the resources, will, and collaboration of the State, school districts, and colleges.”

SREB suggests that the governor and state legislators take command over this effort and set requirements for the state education agencies, local school districts, community colleges and public four-year institutions to enact the recommendations in the College Success Task Force report. Most of the other states who participated in the SREB initiative began their work with state legislation, and Maryland may need to do the same.

Chapter 5:

Texas Progress Report on College and Career Readiness

In 2006, Texas became the first state to mandate the development and use of college-readiness standards. The standards were the centerpiece of the effort to create a P-16 continuum and marked the first formal partnership between the Texas Education Agency, which oversees public education, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which oversees public higher education.

Texas was also the first state to engage in SREB's *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)*. State Senator Florence Shapiro and Representative Rob Eissler recognized that the initiative was a significant opportunity to support the state's existing work to better prepare students for college and careers and to advance the readiness agenda in Texas.

Texas formed a state leadership team in 2008 comprised of state policy-makers, legislative and education agency staff members, and others to advise the college-readiness work in the state. In the following months, SREB conducted site visits and interviews in the state. In January 2009, SREB presented a progress report to the leadership team as a first step in providing policy and education leaders with an action agenda and implementation plan. That report described the context for existing reform efforts, outlined key issues to be addressed, and concluded with a set of specific findings and recommendations that were considered in developing the 2009 legislation and in the subsequent implementation of the state's college- and career-readiness initiatives. This progress report two years later describes where Texas was when the state joined the SREB college-readiness project, summarizes interim progress achieved by March 2011 in implementing the model agenda, and makes suggestions for future action.

Background

State policy has driven much of Texas' college- and career-readiness work, and the Texas Legislature had a large role in guiding the policy that shaped the initiatives. Initial legislation passed in 2006 was followed by other legislative initiatives related to strengthening P-16 reform. From 2006 to 2009, policy-makers passed comprehensive legislation requiring all Texas public schools to improve students' readiness for college and careers.

- Legislation in 2006 (House Bill 1) established a wide-ranging foundation for addressing college readiness through higher standards, assessments, curriculum, professional development and accountability. This bill required vertical teams of high school and college faculty, appointed by the commissioners of education and higher education, to develop college-readiness content standards for English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Once approved by the commissioner of education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas College Readiness Standards (CRS) — addressing what students must know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level courses offered at institutions of higher education — were to be incorporated into the state's foundation curriculum by the state Board of Education.
- House Bill 2237 (2007) provided the basis for increased funding for dropout prevention and college- and career-readiness programs and authorized a number of new initiatives to connect students who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education, at-risk students, and previous dropouts to college and careers.
- Senate Bill 1031 (2007) replaced existing ninth-, 10th- and 11th-grade high school assessments with end-of-course (EOC) exams in Algebra I and II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, English I through III, world geography, world history, and U.S. history. Beginning with students first enrolled in grade nine or

below in the 2011-2012 school year, the end-of-course exams will be used for graduation purposes. Both House Bill 2237 and Senate Bill 1031 contained provisions for 12th-grade transitional courses for students who are not college-ready.

- House Bill 3 (2009) extended and revised earlier college-readiness legislation to include:
 - development of end-of-course exams that embed the college-readiness content standards.
 - establishment of cut scores on Algebra II and English III exams that directly link test performance with readiness to succeed in an entry-level, credit-bearing college course without remediation.
 - creation of a link between college-readiness cut scores on Algebra II and English III and advanced cut scores in earlier grades to indicate individual students' progress toward college readiness.
 - establishment of a statewide school accountability system that measures school progress in improving the extent to which students are meeting the college-readiness standards by the 11th grade. Schools also will be held accountable for increasing the percentages of students who meet EOC test standards for graduating from high school.
 - definition of the postsecondary levels and programs to which the readiness standards apply.
 - identification of the colleges and universities that are required to apply the readiness standards and a provision allowing the commissioner of higher education to require an institution to adopt uniform standards for placement.

The standards-building process established by House Bill 1 in 2006 resulted in a set of college-readiness standards approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in 2008 and later accepted by the state Board of Education. When legislative leaders, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the THECB and others signed on to SREB's *SSCRI* in 2008, the state was poised to build on a nationally impressive array of state policies and actions regarding college and career readiness.

Beginning in mid-2008, the state college-readiness initiative provided a basis for building the 2009 legislation that combined the various components of a comprehensive statewide readiness agenda. The following sections describe Texas' progress on each of the steps in SREB's readiness agenda and suggest areas the state may want to consider to advance its college- and career-ready goals.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Standards

SREB's college- and career-readiness model is framed on the premise that the same standards and performance expectations should be used by both K-12 and postsecondary education and should connect all steps of the college-readiness agenda. Having one set of readiness standards that are recognized and used by all K-12 and public postsecondary sectors is vital to sending clear signals to all public high schools about what it means to be college-/career-ready.

Texas approached the work of the college-readiness agenda earlier and well before the advent of the national Common Core State Standards. The state's content standards are contained in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). In response to the 2006 legislation, college-readiness standards were developed jointly between the sectors; in 2008, the THECB adopted (and the commissioner of education approved) the Texas College Readiness Standards (CRS). The goal of these standards is to establish what students must know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level courses offered at institutions of higher education.

In its initial report to the state, SREB worked with Texas on an intermediate process to further specify the readiness standards in terms of performance expectations and to connect college readiness to assessment, teacher preparation and the curriculum. In a 2009 joint letter, Senator Shapiro, chair of the Senate Education Committee, and Representative Eissler, chair of the House Public Education Committee, requested that the TEA and the THECB work together “to create a plan of action to further specify the CRS in the English/language arts and reading and mathematics TEKS.” The letter further linked the standards with other essential steps in the college-readiness agenda by stipulating that “the end goal is to define these standards in terms of performance expectations that allow these specific standards to be used for assessment, teacher preparation, professional development, and instructional materials.”

Collaboration between K-12 and higher education continued to characterize the critical steps of aligning the state’s standards with the new college-readiness standards and establishing performance expectations. The CRS were incorporated into the content standards (TEKS) by the state Board of Education through a highlighting and alignment process; TEA and THECB staff, with assistance of educators and national experts, have identified the TEKS in Algebra II and English III that are critical for college and career readiness and aligned to the CRS. This work occurred in three phases:

Phase I (March-June 2009): Using the TEKS and the CRS as the base, content experts examined the gap analyses developed by various vertical teams, reviewed descriptions of what it means to be college-ready, compared the identified critical college-readiness skills to national college-readiness skills (e.g., SAT, ACT, ADP, etc.), and developed performance expectations associated with each critical college-readiness skill for English III and Algebra II.

Phase II (September 2009-February 2010): A broader spectrum of high school educators and higher education faculty validated the performance expectations associated with each critical college-readiness skill identified for English III and Algebra II. This validation involved the review and (if necessary) the modification of initial material created in Phase I.

Phase III (March 2010-August 2011): Utilizing the expertise of the Phase II validation group as well as outside experts, the final phase of this project is currently under way and will result in the development of curriculum for Algebra II and English III college-preparatory courses.

Texas has achieved the first critical step in the process of embedding college readiness in K-12 and higher education: The state has established one set of performance standards for English and mathematics that is shared by public schools and postsecondary institutions. The process of reaching consensus on the need for high college-readiness standards and the actual activity involved to develop the standards have been very intentional and collaborative in Texas. SREB entered the work at a time when an external group could bring an “outsider” perspective to the effort as well as add momentum through resources to support the work of the state education agencies and to provide additional expertise.

K-12 Readiness Assessments

SREB holds that school-based assessments of student progress in achieving the readiness standards are important for several reasons:

- If students are assessed early enough in high school, those not meeting the standards can be assisted before graduation and college entry.
- The assessments themselves establish the actual performance expectations of the content standards, thus clarifying for teachers and students the specific performance needed.

The key to the Texas initiative was its commitment to new school testing that would be used as a school accountability program not only for high school graduation but for college and career readiness. Legislation called for a new assessment system based on EOC high school tests in 12 courses in English, mathematics, social studies and science. The Algebra II and English III tests were identified to be used to determine college readiness.

SREB recommended that the following criteria be applied in designing the new assessment system based on EOC tests:

- That the college-readiness tests initially address English/language arts and mathematics, recognizing that skills in these areas are fundamental to higher learning.
- That the tests' qualifying scores apply to readiness to begin postsecondary associate's and bachelor's degree programs.
- That the qualifying scores be established jointly by K-12 and higher education.
- That the qualifying scores powerfully predict success in first-year college work.
- That these college-readiness qualifying scores be separated from any level of scores established for high-stakes high school graduation.

The TEA, working with the THECB and Texas educators, is developing a new assessment system in response to House Bill 3 that will provide the foundation for a new accountability system. The state is phasing out the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and phasing in the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). TEA has a transition plan (www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/hb3plan/) with specifics on the process the agency will use to develop and implement assessment and accountability provisions of House Bill 3. The transition plan clearly links accountability and assessment to college and career readiness.

The plan describes STAAR as a "more unified, comprehensive assessment program that will incorporate more rigorous college and career readiness standards." Student performance will be based around 12 EOC assessments that are linked, where appropriate, to college and career readiness; performance expectations will be high enough that graduating students will be postsecondary-ready. Operational testing is scheduled for the 2011-2012 school year. STAAR performance standards for EOCs will be set in February 2012. Different score levels will be set for college readiness and high school graduation. Correlations will be established that connect the anchor Algebra II and English III college-readiness scores with scores on earlier math and English course tests. Performance levels also are linked to a student's graduation plan, with different levels required in English III and Algebra II for each plan: minimum, recommended, and distinguished. In reading and math, tests for grades three through eight will be linked from grade to grade to the college- and career-readiness performance standards for Algebra II and English III assessments.

Ultimately, schools will be held accountable for increasing the percentages of students who meet the readiness standards or are on a path to meet them.

Curriculum and Transitional Courses

Ensuring that the school curriculum incorporates and targets the revised readiness standards is a key element in SREB's college-readiness model in two ways. First, the whole curriculum should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, using the standards and performance levels established by the EOC assessment aligned with college readiness and mapping back to at least grade eight. Second, supplemental curriculum or transitional courses designed to teach and assess the skills needed to succeed in first-year college courses should be available to help students in 12th grade who, based on 11th-grade assessments, are on track to graduate without being college- and career-ready. The latter is especially critical, given the great likelihood that the revised readiness standards as manifested in the new EOCs will, at least in the shorter term, lead to a much higher percentage of

school students seen as not college-ready. These students need to be provided supplemental help in the senior year to enter college-ready.

SREB supported existing legislation in Texas calling for the readiness standards released in 2008 to be incorporated into 12th-grade, college-preparatory courses for students not meeting the EOC readiness standards and unprepared for college-level study. Students who complete these courses would be administered an EOC assessment.

The courses in reading, writing and mathematics are being developed jointly by the TEA and the THECB.

Groups of K-12 teachers and higher education faculty have been working together for over a year to design transitional courses in English/language arts and math for high school seniors who pass the EOC exams but do not meet the college-readiness performance level. While course descriptions have not yet been developed, the TEA is currently working on completing math and English materials to be used statewide in the 2011-2012 school year.

Teacher Development

The systemic design of SREB's college-readiness model rests on a single, central operating principle: determining what will maximize the conditions in which classroom teachers statewide can best help students be ready for college study. Linking all action steps and decisions about the implementation of a readiness initiative to one criterion — what will motivate and help a classroom teacher to teach to the readiness standards effectively — provides a common, clear thread connecting standards to testing to curriculum to teacher development (both pre-service and in-service) and to school and college accountability.

Effective statewide teacher development plans should focus specifically on the state college-readiness standards to help teachers understand the specific standards and how to teach them effectively in grades eight through 12. Plans also should address how teachers should implement the new 12th-grade courses or activities designed to bring students up to readiness standards once 11th-grade assessments are reviewed. In addition, pre-service teacher preparation programs need to be reviewed and revised as needed to include an emphasis on the core readiness standards. Appropriately reinforcing adjustments need to be made in relevant teacher licensure and certification state regulations.

In the 2009 progress report, SREB addressed teacher development, noting that it was critical that a program be established explicitly to convey the new college-readiness TEKS. In addition, the report recommended that responsibilities for the funding and delivery of professional development be clarified — too many different programs administered by too many different players may reduce potential for the investment to have the best chance of success. A more centralized approach on these critical teacher policies would include planning, delivering and evaluating the effectiveness of policies for pre-service and in-service training.

The TEA has indicated that the critical college- and career-readiness skills within the TEKS will be used for teacher preparation and professional development, but the agency recognizes that other pieces of the work — including the assessments and transitional courses — must be in place before professional development can be offered and changes to teacher preparation programs can be made. At the same time that the Texas teams are developing the transitional courses, they are shaping a statewide plan for teacher development to ensure that teachers know the college-ready standards and how to teach them. **The TEA will develop an online course to assist teachers in understanding the transitional courses and the materials developed for the course, as well as to instruct teachers on how to teach the content to their students.** These courses were scheduled to be first used during the pilot process in spring 2011.

Statewide professional development includes a focus on the College Readiness Standards through teacher academies on state standards, adolescent literacy, algebra readiness, science and EOC success. Each academy features instructional strategies and content knowledge and is supported by online follow-up modules and instructional resources.

Online professional learning communities are being established to provide ongoing support and access to additional online professional development courses.

Postsecondary Application of the Readiness Standards

The THECB has been an active partner in the state's college readiness initiative from its inception. With publication of the *Texas College Readiness Standards*, the THECB helped develop consensus among policy-makers, ground the college-readiness initiative in the higher education community, and shape the work of the alignment and transition course groups. Additionally, the THECB is collaborating with the state Board of Education in setting the readiness qualifying scores.

SREB raised a concern in the initial state progress report regarding the lack of clarity in how colleges and university assessment and placement practices will reflect the college-readiness standards approved by the state Board. SREB saw this as a concern because postsecondary institutions used a range of approved assessments and there was no common approach to placement testing shared by all higher education.

For higher education, aligning standards, performance levels, and college-readiness tests for placement in developmental or credit-bearing courses is important, and the readiness standards and related performance levels used in EOC testing should be substantially the same as used in the placement testing. But there is no common approach to placement testing shared by all higher education in Texas. SREB recommended aligning the high school EOC test-readiness process with the college-readiness procedures used by public higher education through these steps:

- Establish a uniform system of placement/readiness testing and associated reading, writing and math standards that define skills needed to succeed in first-year introductory work for all community college associate's degree transfer/career-technical programs, and all regional university baccalaureate degree programs.
- Ensure that the standards and performance levels on which this uniform placement process is based are identical to the readiness standards and performance expectations established for the EOC tests in Algebra II and English III.
- Ensure that students who meet the readiness performance standards on the advanced EOC tests (English III and Algebra II) are exempt from taking further placement or readiness tests upon admission to a public community college or regional university in Texas.

To address the issue of placement standards for developmental education courses across Texas public postsecondary institutions, House Bill 3 gave the commissioner of higher education the option to adopt rules requiring institutions of higher education to adopt uniform standards for placement of students who do not meet the requirements for college readiness under the advanced EOC tests or other college-readiness assessments recognized by the Coordinating Board under the Texas Success Initiative (Texas Education Code, Section 51.3062). Additionally, students who complete a recommended or advanced high school program and meet the college-readiness performance standards on Algebra II and English III EOC assessments may be exempt from placement testing.

The THECB is addressing the application of the readiness standards and assessments in the P-16 College Readiness and Success Strategic Action Plan: A key objective is to align K-12 exit-level assessments with entry-level expectations of higher education. The THECB commissioned a study of the Board's recognized college-readiness assessments to determine the degree to which the various tests assess the College Readiness Standards and found that the CRS performance expectations are, on average, more cognitively demanding and more rigorous than the test items provided by the testing companies for analysis.

In concert with the new directions being taken in the K-12 sector and college-readiness performance measures on EOC assessments, the higher education community plans to develop and pilot a college-readiness assessment system that includes diagnostic and placement capabilities. If the pilot produces a reliable and valid instrument that measures readiness and assists institutions in properly placing students in developmental education or college credit courses, then the THECB will implement the system statewide.

Texas has moved rapidly over the past two years to redesign its K-12 assessment system and ensure that the revised college-readiness standards are reflected in EOC tests and that appropriate performance levels are set. The higher education community has assisted in this work and has taken steps to improve its placement testing instruments and processes to enhance alignment with K-12's higher standards. Close collaboration between the TEA and the THECB throughout the process, plus strong legislative support, have been critical factors in aligning assessments with the other elements of a comprehensive college-readiness agenda.

K-12 and Higher Education Accountability

To ensure that the college- and career-readiness initiative is truly statewide, all schools must make college and career readiness a priority, and accountability — for both K-12 and higher education — is central to success. Both school and student performance on the college- and career-readiness assessments should be part of the state school accountability program. This sends a clear message that it is important that all schools make postsecondary readiness a priority and that increasing percentages of students meet the standards.

In its initial report to the state for this project, SREB noted that EOC exams should have a central place in high school accountability. Specifically, as Texas considered a revised school accountability system, SREB recommended that having increased percentages of students meeting college-readiness standards should assume a central place in the accountability plan. That action would send a strong signal to teachers about the readiness standards and their priority.

Legislation in 2009 reflects SREB's suggestions and provides for a statewide school accountability system that measures school progress in improving the extent to which students are meeting the college-readiness standards by the 11th grade. The new accountability system will hold schools accountable for college readiness in two ways:

- in terms of the increasing percentages of students who actually achieve the readiness standards on the Algebra II and English III EOCs.
- in how effectively schools help students in earlier grade levels of mathematics and English achieve scores on these EOC tests that predict success in subsequent levels of related course work.

The TEA's transition plan points out that, rather than modify the existing system to align with new provisions of House Bill 3, the agency will design a new accountability system in 2011-2012 and implement it in 2013, reevaluating every aspect of the system. "The defining characteristic of the new accountability system will be the emphasis on college- and career-ready performance on the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)."

In addition to accountability at the K-12 level, SREB's comprehensive college-readiness approach calls for accountability at the postsecondary level as well. For a college- and career-readiness initiative to be truly systemic and effective, postsecondary education as a whole must be involved in many of the key steps of the college-readiness implementation agenda, especially placement testing that is based on the specific readiness standards and performance levels adopted statewide. Accordingly, states need to hold higher education more accountable for the outcomes that will flow from a commitment to increasing readiness for higher education; namely, increasing the percentage of entering students who succeed in first-year courses — or if not, who successfully complete remedial work based on the shared state readiness standards.

Summary and Observations

The Texas Legislature set an ambitious college-readiness agenda and timeframe for K-12 and postsecondary education agencies to meet. House Bill 3 (2009) set a significant educational goal: Texas should become one of the top 10 states for graduating college-ready students by the 2019-2020 school year. With this in the background, Texas engaged the opportunity to conduct a college-readiness initiative from a point of strength: Key policy-makers in both the House and the Senate had worked together and crafted successful legislation that established a strong foundation for significant changes in content standards, assessments, curricula, accountability and teacher development. These critical areas form the infrastructure of SREB's statewide college- and career-readiness agenda.

With the development of the Texas College Readiness Standards in 2008, the state was well-positioned to collaborate with SREB and take the necessary steps involving standards alignment, curricular revisions, transitional course design and development. Once the many evolving pieces of the agenda are in place, Texas will be a national model for designing and implementing all of the components of a comprehensive statewide college- and career-ready initiative.

Chapter 6:

Virginia Progress Report on College and Career Readiness

Virginia has made progress in recent years to address systemic education issues through broad-based reform. The state joined SREB's Strengthening *Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)* in 2008 as part of its reform efforts. Virginia formed an *SSCRI* leadership team in fall of that year to advise the project's work in the commonwealth. The leadership team consists of the secretary of education, the state superintendent for public instruction, the chancellor of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), the executive director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the president of the Virginia Board of Education, and an advisor to the governor for education policy. Together, these policy leaders have supported several changes to Virginia's college- and career-readiness initiative.

This final state report describes where Virginia was when the commonwealth joined the initiative, summarizes interim progress achieved by March 2011 in implementing SREB's model readiness agenda, and makes suggestions for future action.

Background

In 1995, Virginia began a broad educational reform program that resulted in revised, rigorous content standards — the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) — in four core areas: English, mathematics, science, and history and social science. These grade-by-grade and course-based standards were developed over 14 months, with revision teams including K-12 teachers and administrators, higher education representatives, community and agency partners, and citizen groups. All four sets of standards were revised in two recent revision windows, 2001-2003 and 2008-2010, as required by the Virginia General Assembly.

In 2007, the state Board of Education authorized the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to conduct studies to determine what factors contribute to success in postsecondary education. As part of that effort, the VDOE requested that Achieve's American Diploma Project (ADP), the College Board and ACT conduct studies comparing their respective standards for postsecondary readiness to the Virginia SOL in English/reading and mathematics. With the state review of standards starting in 2008, the state Board of Education adopted revised SOL in English and mathematics. The revised standards reflected substantial input and recommended changes provided by college faculty and other experts from the College Board, ACT, the ADP and the business community. These groups have supported Virginia's revisions and have validated the standards as college- and career-ready.

In 2008-2009, SREB, with the help of the Virginia leadership team, conducted a thorough examination of the current college- and career-readiness efforts and Virginia's need to build a specific and successful college- and career-readiness framework. SREB staff and consultants conducted interviews with the leadership team members, other education leaders, K-12 and higher education state agency staff, K-12 teachers and postsecondary faculty.

In October 2009, SREB provided a preliminary progress report based on the findings from these interviews and document reviews. The report outlined the status of readiness efforts, the ability to sustain a college- and career-readiness initiative, and a list of specific recommendations for Virginia and its leadership to consider in order to implement the components of SREB's comprehensive, model college- and career-readiness agenda. Suggestions were made in each of the six SREB model agenda areas: standards, assessments, transitional courses, professional development, postsecondary application, and accountability measures.

Recommendations included creating college-readiness standards and performance expectations for senior-year transitional courses in English and mathematics, creating teacher professional development plans for the transitional courses, incorporating readiness standards into college placement tests, and establishing college-readiness accountability measures for K-12 and higher education.

The following sections describe Virginia's progress on each of the elements in SREB's readiness agenda and suggest areas the state may want to consider to advance its college- and career-ready goals.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Standards

SREB's college- and career-readiness model agenda is framed on the premise that the same standards and performance expectations should be used by both K-12 and postsecondary education — and they should connect all steps of the college-readiness agenda. Having one set of readiness standards that are recognized by both K-12 and all public postsecondary education is vital in defining for all public high schools what it means to be college- and career- ready.

Before joining the *SSCRI*, however, Virginia could not point to a specific set of college-readiness standards that were clear in content and performance expectations and were shared fully by both K-12 and postsecondary education. K-12 was unable to identify a subset of its Board-adopted core standards as the recognized set for college-level work, and the postsecondary sector had not established a common set of standards across all public higher education and applied them through a common placement process.

With support from the SREB project, Virginia enlisted the services of a consultant, who worked with a team of VDOE, VCCS and SCHEV staff members to develop a set of higher standards for readiness in mathematics and English that would prepare students for success in entry-level college courses, as well as for a career.

The educators drew from several sources of learning standards that had already been developed, vetted and validated by educators and the business community:

- Virginia's SOL in English and mathematics.
- The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), developed through a national collaboration led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association.
- The VCCS' general education goals and student learning outcomes.
- Career and technical education competencies.
- Other standards identified as important or critical for success by faculty at Virginia's two- and four-year colleges.

Using these standards and a systematic method, VDOE identified a preliminary set of potential college- and career-readiness performance expectations in English and mathematics. Next, VDOE developed a validation survey for higher education faculty and other stakeholders to determine how important each expectation is to students' college and career readiness. VDOE sent the survey to educators and other relevant stakeholders identified by the VCCS, SCHEV, the career and technical education community, and high school educators. The results of the survey were used by VDOE, VCCS and SCHEV leaders to finalize an agreed-upon set of **Virginia College and Career Ready (CCR) Performance Expectations**. (See http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college_career_readiness/index.shtml#expectations.)

The CCR Performance Expectations identify those expectations in grades nine through 12 that are considered important or essential for students to master to be academically prepared to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing English and mathematics courses in college or in career training. The skills in English and mathematics also support student success in college courses in other subject areas, such as science and history. The expectations were developed through a collaborative process that included faculty from Virginia's two- and four-year colleges and universities, members of the business community, and high school English and mathematics educators. The state Board of Education accepted the performance expectations for both English and mathematics.

K-12 Assessments

SREB's model agenda calls for high school students to be assessed by methods that measure their progress on the state-adopted college- and career-readiness standards/performance expectations. Students should be assessed at the end of the junior year, so those who need it can receive targeted assistance in the senior year to remedy deficiencies and certify readiness for postsecondary or advanced study. SREB emphasizes that the readiness qualifying scores on the assessments should strongly predict success in first-year college work and that these scores will necessarily be higher than those used to indicate high school graduation.

Among its findings in the October 2009 progress report, SREB determined that Virginia's current SOL end-of-course (EOC) tests in Algebra II and English III were appropriate assessments of college and career readiness; however, the report recommended that Virginia define a college-ready qualifying or cut score that powerfully predicts a student has the skills needed for academic success in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. The EOC tests are conducted by the end of the junior year.

Prior to the SREB initiative, VDOE and SCHEV staff planned to conduct a study of secondary and postsecondary student performance data to help determine the appropriate cut scores in English and mathematics on the SOL that denote a high school senior's true readiness for college-level work. The *SSCRI* expedited this work. **Findings from a study of Virginia's student performance data showed that Virginia's end-of-course assessments in Algebra II, reading and writing are strong predictors of enrollment in credit-bearing courses in college, as is Virginia's advanced studies diploma.** The state Board of Education is using these results and the CCR Performance Expectations in its work to establish college- and career-ready cut scores on Virginia's English III and Algebra II SOL assessments.

In addition, the state Board of Education adopted more rigorous Standards of Accreditation (SOA) in 2009 that included increased graduation requirements for students and accreditation requirements for public schools. The accreditation requirements now include a policy that requires each middle grades and high school student, beginning in the seventh grade, to have an Academic & Career Plan — a personal learning plan that aligns postsecondary academic and career goals with the student's course of study. Students can access these plans electronically, along with other information regarding accelerated-learning options, Virginia's community college and four-year institution acceptance requirements, college transfer information, career information and so forth. With an account, these tools can be accessed electronically at the Virginia Education Wizard (<https://www.vawizard.org/vccs/Main.action>). The Wizard is a state-of-the-art Web portal built by the VCCS in 2009 so that students of all ages can access comprehensive information on preparing for (and succeeding academically in) the middle grades through employment.

Curriculum and Transitional Courses

Ensuring that the school curriculum incorporates and emphasizes the revised readiness standards is a key element in SREB's college-readiness model agenda. The model asserts that the public school curriculum should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, using the standards and performance levels estab-

lished by the end-of-course assessment aligned with college readiness and mapping back to at least grade eight. Supplemental curriculum or transitional courses designed to teach and assess the skills needed to succeed in first-year college courses should be available to help students in 12th grade who, based on 11th-grade assessments, are on track to graduate but are not college- or career-ready.

The Virginia College and Career Ready (CCR) Performance Expectations for English and mathematics also have been used to develop senior-year transitional courses, which Virginia calls “capstone courses” to help high school seniors prepare for college-level courses before graduating. The state Board of Education already accepted the English capstone course content description and pilot stage information. (See: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college_career_readiness/index.shtml#expectations.)

Virginia’s English CCR Performance Expectations and capstone course create a high-interest, fast-paced program designed to add to certain students’ preparation for critical reading, college and workplace writing, and career-ready communications by enhancing their skills in reading, the writing process and creation of effective texts, and effective communications (speaking, listening, and collaborating). The course is for students who: 1) have satisfactorily completed the SOL-based English III course; 2) have achieved at least minimum proficiency on both the SOL reading and writing assessments; and 3) are college-bound but may not be fully college-ready.

The mathematics CCR Performance Expectations and capstone course content description will be completed and accessible online in early summer 2011. This capstone course contains high-interest contextualized content designed to give students an additional boost for competent and successful entry into college and careers. The course will add to students’ preparation for college and the workplace by enhancing skills in: 1) number and quantity, functions and algebra, geometry, and statistics and probability; and 2) simultaneously reinforcing readiness skills and dispositions in adaptability and flexibility, creativity and innovation, leadership, team work, collaboration and work ethic.

The course will augment skills in applied mathematical concepts through mathematical investigations targeting outcomes defined in Virginia’s College and Career Ready Mathematics Performance Expectations. Students will research, collect and analyze data; develop and support ideas and conjectures; investigate, evaluate, and incorporate appropriate resources; and determine appropriate problem-solving approaches and decision-making algorithms in a variety of real-world contexts and applied settings.

The course is designed for students who: 1) have satisfactorily completed the required SOL-based mathematics courses; 2) have achieved at least minimum proficiency on at least two of the high school SOL mathematics assessments; and 3) intend to go to college but may not be fully college-ready. This also includes students who plan to enter the work force or further career training and need an extra boost to reach career-readiness levels.

The VDOE plans to pilot the English and mathematics capstone courses during the 2011-2012 school year. Course materials needed to implement the courses will be available as they are developed.

Teacher Development

The systemic design of SREB’s college-readiness model agenda rests on a single, central operating principle: That which will maximize the conditions in which classroom teachers statewide can best help students be ready for college study. Linking all action steps and decisions about the implementation of a readiness initiative to one criterion — what will motivate and help a classroom teacher to teach effectively the readiness standards — provides a common, clear thread connecting standards to testing to curriculum to teacher development (both pre-service and in-service) and to school and college accountability.

Effective statewide teacher development plans should focus specifically on the state's college-readiness standards to help teachers understand the specific standards and how to teach them in grades eight through 12. Plans also should address how teachers should implement the new 12th-grade courses or activities designed to bring students up to readiness standards once 11th-grade assessments are reviewed. In addition, teacher preparation programs need to be reviewed and revised as needed to include an emphasis on the core readiness standards, and appropriate adjustments need to be made in relevant teacher licensure and certification state regulations.

In addition to VDOE's plans to provide technical assistance to high school teachers for the capstone courses, **Virginia has commitments from four state universities to establish professional development centers to support schools in their efforts to improve students' preparation for college and careers.** These centers will provide course work and ongoing teacher support for the content of the college- and career-ready performance expectations. The work will be accomplished through federal teacher training funds. As part of their work, the centers will develop sample capstone course materials so that teachers can teach secondary courses more effectively and will be ready to teach the capstone courses when their divisions implement the programs. As well, SCHEV has issued a request for proposals that establishes as a priority support for teacher professional development on the performance expectations. SCHEV intends to issue up to 10 grants of no more than \$200,000. The grants require collaboration between the school divisions being served and four-year universities, to include colleges of education and arts and sciences within the higher education institutions. The program is funded with federal funds from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title II, Part A.

The institution(s) of higher education that are awarded these grants will develop full teacher development programs for teachers participating in the pilot that focus on how to improve instruction for college and career readiness and how to implement the capstone courses. Capstone course materials will be developed and refined by stakeholders and the VDOE over the course of the pilot year, 2011-2012. Materials will be made available statewide to school divisions throughout Virginia as the school divisions offering the capstone course increase during 2012-2013.

Postsecondary Education Application of the Standards

SREB's readiness agenda emphasizes that the same kind of performance levels on the readiness standards need to be used and applied by both K-12 and all higher education. To this end, the **VCCS is redesigning its placement process to reflect new assessments. The new assessments will include placement and diagnostic components in order to determine whether incoming students are ready** to move into college-level courses or need developmental education classes in reading, writing or mathematics. The final CCR Performance Expectations for English and mathematics will inform the development and revision of student learning outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics necessary for entry into college-level mathematics and English courses and curricula. These student learning outcomes form the content foundation for the new assessments.

With the implementation by VDOE of the new capstone courses built upon the performance expectations and the development of new placement instruments by the VCCS, discussions between VDOE and VCCS are anticipated in order to address processes to support the movement of students from the capstone courses into Virginia's community colleges. Possibilities include discussing the use of a new screening test (based on the new community college placement exam) as exit exam options for the English and mathematics capstone courses. These considerations speak to the critical linkages from senior year to college and reflect the ongoing work by VDOE and VCCS in the areas of college readiness and student success. As well, VDOE and VCCS are discussing the most appropriate ways to use data from the in-depth placement assessments to provide meaningful feedback reports to high schools.

K-12 and Higher Education Accountability

To ensure that the initiative is truly statewide, all schools must make college and career readiness a priority, and accountability — for both K-12 and higher education — is central to the success of a college- and career-readiness agenda. Both school and student performance on the college- and career-readiness assessments should be part of the state school accountability program. This sends a clear message that it is important that all schools make post-secondary readiness a priority and that increasing percentages of students meet the standards.

Virginia's Standards of Quality (SOQ) incorporate accountability for required classes, and the state education agencies provide multiple examples of actions to carry out the accountability mandate. The state is identifying additional accountability measures and incentives for schools to increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school having demonstrated the academic and career skills needed to be successful in postsecondary education programs.

The SOQ requires schools to meet certain standards of student achievement in order to meet state accreditation, as well as federal regulations. **Student performance on the new CCR Performance Expectations and the English and mathematics capstone courses will be part of the data collection requirements for schools.** Students who take these classes will be tested through the SOL and required to meet the validated college- and career-readiness cut scores in order to be considered college-ready.

VDOE and VCCS have set up several action teams to review K-12 and community college standards to ensure that not only are the standards aligned, but that each level of assessment in high school and college represents a true test of students' skills and knowledge of the standards.

The VDOE also has an extensive incentive program for K-12 schools, called the Virginia Index of Performance (VIP), that recognizes schools and school divisions that meet or exceed minimum state and federal accountability standards for at least two consecutive years. The program provides incentives for continuous improvement and the achievement of excellence goals established by the state Board of Education. Schools yearly strive to receive a VIP award, and consider it a huge honor when they are invited to the state capitol to meet the governor and receive their school banner. In February 2011, the state Board adopted changes to the VIP criteria to strengthen the incentives for high schools to increase student preparation for college and careers by increasing emphasis on the course work and achievement levels needed for success in college. (See: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2011/02_feb/agenda_items/item_a.pdf.)

Most important, however, a joint agreement among SCHEV, VCCS and VDOE was released on February 23, 2011, via press release (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2011/feb23.shtml) by all three agencies. The agreement highlights the new college- and career-ready work, the development of the Virginia College and Career Ready Performance Expectations, and the vow that all three agencies recognize that these are the standards that delineate college and career readiness.

This agreement, while it is simple in idea, is exactly the kind of document that will help to solidify the work that has been done in Virginia and guarantee to the public that not only was the work a collaboration, but it is and will continue to be accepted and used by all three agencies.

Summary and Observations

Over the short period of approximately two years, Virginia has taken college and career readiness from an idea to a statewide education reform initiative. Driven by strong leadership in the state Department of Education and the Virginia Community College System, and with ongoing support from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Virginia has made dramatic progress in developing a college-readiness agenda.

Virginia is the only state in the *SSCRI* that has developed data-driven, validated college- and career-readiness cut scores for the state end-of-course SOL exams in English III and Algebra II, and it is the only state with a fully funded creation and implementation plan for teacher development for college- and career-readiness courses.

While other states began their readiness work by passing legislation, Virginia has outlined an agency-led approach. Virginia's education agencies worked together to develop and have committed to the new performance expectations for college and career readiness, they have vetted and approved the course descriptions for the capstone courses, and they have thoroughly assessed the necessary assessments and cut scores to denote college- and career-ready knowledge and skills. Following the future work on the higher education teacher development grants, implementation of the new postsecondary placement test, and use of accountability measures for college and career readiness, Virginia will have implemented all of the steps in SREB's recommended model agenda.

With this agency-led effort, Virginia has established a strong, sustainable foundation for successful reform in the commonwealth's high schools and community colleges. After statewide implementation takes place, Virginia will have one of the most comprehensive college- and career-readiness agendas in the region and the nation.

Chapter 7:

West Virginia Progress Report on College and Career Readiness

West Virginia joined SREB's *Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI)* in 2009. Then-Governor Joe Manchin III, former SREB Chair, saw this as a dynamic piece of his agenda that fit well with existing efforts to improve college attendance and completion. The West Virginia leadership for the project from 2009-2010 included Dr. Brian Noland, chancellor, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC), and Dr. Steve Paine, former state superintendent of schools, with significant involvement and support from former First Lady Gayle Manchin, a state Board of Education member and former educator, who helped to bring attention to the importance of college- and career- readiness efforts for the state. In 2011, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and State Superintendent J. Ted Mattern indicated continued support for the initiative.

The West Virginia leadership team for this project formed in 2010, with representation from the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), the Higher Education Policy Commission and the Legislature.

This progress report describes where West Virginia was when the state joined the SREB college-readiness project, summarizes what it had achieved by March 2011 in implementing the model agenda, and makes suggestions for future action.

Background

Several events during the opening decade of the 21st century positioned West Virginia to improve the college and career readiness of its students:

- House Bill 4319 (2002) established a process for improving education and restructured several areas of public education. The bill encouraged higher student performance and higher accountability standards and called for the development and implementation of a system to hold schools accountable for student performance and progress toward obtaining a high quality education.
- In 2005, West Virginia joined the Partnership for 21st Century Skills — now called the Global21 Initiative — and committed to systemic changes that would prepare West Virginia youth to be productive and successful citizens globally. The initiative has several key components, one of which is based on “Standards and Curriculum Aligned with 21st Century Skills,” whereby the WVDE “ensures that curriculum standards incorporate 21st century skills, have the appropriate levels of rigor and relevance, and align with national and international standards.” In addition, the WVDE applies more rigorous graduation requirements for course completion, technology proficiency, and the integration of 21st century learning skills across the curriculum (*A Chronicle of West Virginia's Global21 Initiative*, June 2009).

Legislation in 2007 and 2008 provided a platform for implementation of many aspects of the Global21 Initiative.

- Senate Bill 657 (2007) called for revisions to align education standards, assessments of student performance, and the system for holding schools and school districts accountable for student performance with the state's 21st Century initiative.
- Senate Bill 595 (2008) contained “Vision 2020: An Education Blueprint for 2020,” requiring the state Board of Education to establish “a clear plan that includes clear goals, objectives, strategies, indicators and benchmarks.” This legislation also created the Process for Improving Education Council, with broad-based

representation to make recommendations regarding Vision 2020 to the state Board. Members included the legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability, the governor's office, the chancellor of the Higher Education Policy Commission, the chancellor for Community and Technical College Education, and the state superintendent of public schools. Finally, the bill addressed state goals and accountability for higher education.

In an additional effort to improve college and career readiness in the state, in January 2009, the WVHEPC created a P-20 Collaborative Task Force, designed to encourage greater collaboration among the state's primary, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions. The group focuses on an array of educational issues, such as improving the preparation, retention and professional development of educators, as well as promoting a seamless education system that connects all levels of learning.

The following sections describe the state's progress on each of the steps in SREB's readiness agenda and suggest areas the state may consider to advance its college- and career-ready goals.

Statewide College and Career Readiness Standards

SREB's college- and career-readiness model is framed on the premise that the same standards and performance expectations should be used by both K-12 and postsecondary education and should connect all steps of the college-readiness agenda. Having one set of readiness standards that are approved and used by K-12 and all public postsecondary institutions (two-year and four-year sectors) is vital to sending clear signals to all public high schools about what it means to be college- and career-ready.

In May 2011, the West Virginia state Board of Education unanimously approved the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English/language arts and mathematics for alignment with West Virginia's 21st Century Content Standards and Objectives (CSOs) and resources with implementation fall 2011. The state's adoption of the CCSS provides a base on which pre-K-12 and postsecondary education can share the same readiness standards.

The education goals delineated in West Virginia Code call for the state Department of Education to ensure a quality education with a "thorough and efficient education system...that provides equal access to substantive curricular offerings and appropriate related services for all students." One of the elements of such a system is "a demanding curriculum for all students, with emphasis on the core academic programs of study that are aligned with rigorous standards for 21st century content, learning skills and technology tools and are communicated to students, parents and communities" (Title 126, Legislative Rule, Board of Education, Sec. 126-42.1). Effective in 2008, revisions to state Board of Education rules included changes to align the CSOs with the intent of the 21st Century and Global21 initiatives.

In the months since adoption of the CCSS, the state Department of Education has worked on aligning the Common Core with West Virginia's 21st Century CSOs. **The new standards are scheduled to be implemented across the state's public school system in the fall of 2011.** The alignment step is essential and must be completed before the education agencies can turn their attention to the remaining elements of a comprehensive agenda for college/career readiness: curricular revisions with transitional courses, assessments and teacher development.

K-12 Assessments

With the recent adoption of the CCSS, West Virginia is in the process of examining the standards and has not yet moved to the assessment work with the revised standards. However, through the efforts of former Superintendent Paine, West Virginia has been a leader in the core standards and national assessment consortia movements, in which a wide range of assessments will be developed around the CCSS.

West Virginia joined more than 30 other states in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), one of the two national groups working on assessments tied to the CCSS. In September 2010, SBAC received a four-year, \$176 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a student assessment system aligned to a common core of academic standards. SBAC will create state-of-the-art adaptive online exams, using “open source” technology and have them available to states in 2014. In the future, this should enable a more robust assessment of college readiness and the progress students are making toward this goal.

Until the SBAC assessments are in place, the state will continue using WESTESTs to measure high school students’ readiness. WESTEST2 is a custom-designed summative assessment of West Virginia’s 21st Century CSOs in the areas of online writing, reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies and science for grades three through 11. The WESTEST2 scores for grade 11 in mathematics and in reading and language arts are used to determine if students have mastered the knowledge and skills students need to be successful in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses. Students in grade 11 not meeting the College Readiness Index for mathematics will be expected to take a college transition mathematics class in grade 12. **The state will be analyzing the alignment of the WESTEST2 standards, performance results and expectations with other measures of college and career readiness, such as sub-scores in mathematics and language arts on the ACT. The state also expects to validate WESTEST2 scores with actual first-year college performance.**

All West Virginia students must also take an online writing test as a component of the reading/language arts portion of WESTEST2. The purpose of WESTEST2 Online Writing is to inform instruction and to assist teachers in improving students’ writing skills.

Curriculum and Transitional Courses

Ensuring that the school curriculum incorporates and targets the revised readiness standards is a key element in SREB’s college-readiness model. The model asserts that the public school curriculum should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, mapping back to at least eighth grade. Supplemental curriculum or transitional courses designed to teach and assess the skills needed to succeed in first-year college courses should be available to help students in 12th grade who, based on 11th-grade assessments, are on track to graduate without being college- and career-ready.

As the state focused its attention on the CCSS initiative and competing for the federal Race to the Top grant early in 2010, the direct work toward creating a comprehensive college- and career-readiness agenda was delayed. In October 2010, the state Board of Education voted to postpone the adoption of instructional materials for two years.

But ongoing concerns with the performance of students in mathematics led the state to focus on revisions in mathematics. The state Board of Education changed graduation requirements for ninth-graders who entered in 2010, and certain students must take a college transitional math course in their senior year if they do not pass the college-readiness assessment: “Students in the professional pathway and college bound students in the skilled pathway, who do not achieve the State assessment college readiness benchmark for mathematics, shall be required to take a college transition mathematics course during their senior year.” Students in the “skilled pathway” are supposed to take at least three mathematics classes in grades nine through 12. **College Transition Mathematics must be offered annually and will be counted as a mathematics credit.**

Work is under way to have a team of K-12 teachers and higher education faculty work with a consultant to design a transitional course on reading, writing and English/language arts. No ruling has been made on whether this course will be mandatory, as is the math transitional course for students pursuing a professional pathway.

Teacher Development

The systemic design of SREB's college-readiness model rests on a single, central operating principle: determining what will maximize the conditions in which classroom teachers statewide can best prepare students for college study. Effective statewide teacher development plans should focus specifically on helping teachers understand the specific college-readiness standards and how to teach them effectively in grades eight through 12. Plans also should address how teachers should implement the new 12th-grade courses or activities designed to bring students up to readiness standards once 11th-grade assessments are reviewed. In addition, pre-service teacher preparation programs should be reviewed and revised as needed to include an emphasis on the core readiness standards. Appropriately reinforcing adjustments need to be made in relevant teacher licensure and certification state regulations.

The Department of Education provides a wide variety of professional development opportunities for superintendents, principals, county leadership teams and teachers. The state's eight Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) are under the state Board of Education's authority and are responsible for providing technical assistance to low-performing schools and school systems and providing high-quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance students' progress and performance. Until the revised state standards are in place, plans for teacher development, either pre- or in-service, are on hold.

To assist teachers and others in administering the 2010 WESTEST2 Online Writing assessment, the Department of Education has developed "video scenarios" and worksheets based on actual situations from past administrations of the online writing test. The scenarios are designed to help principals, building-level coordinators and examiners "identify and understand improper test administration practices and possible policy violations that could lead to a variety of punitive actions, including the possible loss of individual teaching licenses and/or possible invalidation of student assessment results." (Source: West Virginia Department of Education). Higher education representatives also are involved to help create a seamless transition between pre-service teachers and those working in the classrooms.

Postsecondary Education Application of the Standards

SREB's readiness agenda emphasizes that the same kind of performance levels on the readiness standards need to be used and applied by both K-12 and all higher education. In 2009, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission created the P-20 Collaborative Task Force to encourage greater collaboration among the state's primary, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions. The group focuses on many educational issues, including promoting a seamless education system and improving the preparation, retention, and professional development of educators.

In addition to the alignment of college placement assessments with K-12 college-readiness standards, an important related issue is placement testing for higher education. Implementation of a single placement test with a cut score high enough to predict success in college-level course work is highly recommended in SREB's model agenda. **West Virginia has a statewide standard for assessment and placement into developmental courses, and students are placed in these courses based on their entrance exam scores.** Commission procedural rules establish the standards and include assessments in English and mathematics such as ACT and SAT sub-section scores, commercial placement tests such as ASSET and COMPASS, and nationally accepted test scores.

The use of a single cut score statewide for all public postsecondary institutions in West Virginia is an important aspect of the state's assessment processes for higher education. But the array of assessment instruments that institutions can use may complicate the development of transitional courses in mathematics and English and the ability to accurately determine students' readiness for college-level work. The alignment of standards, curricula, assessments (both K-12 and postsecondary), and placement in college-level courses is a complex but necessary progression of steps, and removing obstacles to simplify the process wherever possible is essential.

K-12 and Higher Education Accountability

To ensure that the college-readiness initiative is truly statewide, all schools must make college and career readiness a priority, and accountability — for both K-12 and higher education — is central to success. West Virginia’s education policy incorporates accountability, and the state education agencies provide multiple examples of actions to carry out the accountability mandate.

Unlike a few other states in this project, there is no clear legislative directive holding the state Department of Education and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission accountable for developing and implementing a college- and career-readiness agenda or for its results. Nonetheless, as noted above, legislation in 2007 holds the state Department of Education, schools and school districts responsible for student performance with the state’s 21st Century initiative, while 2008 legislation addressed state goals and accountability for higher education.

Additionally, **Senate Bill 585 (2008) created the Process for Improving Education Council to increase opportunity for consultation among state policy leaders on education issues.** The council’s work may include “determination of the things that students should know and be able to do as the result of a thorough and efficient education, the performance and progress of students toward meeting the high quality standards established by the state Board, adopting goals, objectives, strategies, indicators and benchmarks for public education and any further improvements necessary to increase the capacity of schools and school systems to deliver a thorough and efficient education.” This charge to the council provides an opportunity for interaction and, thus, it seems likely that to some extent, accountability concerns can be considered under the umbrella of prior legislation. A stronger position, however, would include policy that directly charges specific education agencies and holds them accountable for setting goals and making progress on them.

Summary and Observations

West Virginia engaged in the college- and career-readiness initiative much more recently than the other five participating states. Pieces of legislation and other activities added momentum to the college-readiness discussion, and West Virginia has progressed on some aspects of SREB’s college- and career-readiness agenda. Yet the state has no specific legislation calling for a comprehensive overhaul of the state standards, assessment and accountability that would propel a college- and career-readiness agenda in West Virginia. Recent changes in state leadership also have slowed the readiness work.

The changes in 2011 in state-level leadership at the state Department of Education and in the governor’s office may result in temporary delays, but the department and the state Board of Education have indicated their commitment to implementing the full college- and career-readiness agenda. Solid support from higher education and the legislature for a strong college- and career-readiness goal has been a very positive feature of West Virginia’s efforts. It can be anticipated that the P-20 Collaborative Task Force may provide a forum for collaboration and development of the various steps of the agenda as they are addressed.

