Alabama and SREB

**SREB and its mission**

The Southern Regional Education Board is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works with 16 member states to improve public education at every level — from pre-K to postdoctoral study. The nation’s first interstate compact for education, SREB was created in 1948 by governors and legislators who recognized the link between education and the economic vitality of the region.

SREB’s expertise in policy and research, its nationally recognized school improvement programs and its other services enable the member states to share resources, partner on initiatives and achieve results that would be impossible individually. SREB advises state government and education leaders on key issues; reports progress on important benchmarks; and works directly with colleges, public schools and states to improve instruction, student achievement, teacher quality and school leadership. Through its High Schools That Work and Making Middle Grades Work programs, SREB trains and assists more than 12,000 educators each year in research-based school improvement strategies.

SREB’s current areas of focus include: helping states increase students’ readiness for postsecondary education and college-degrees completion; and the Middle Grades Commission, led by North Carolina Governor Beverly Perdue.

SREB’s work is guided by its Challenge to Lead Goals for Education, which call for SREB states to lead the nation in educational progress. Meeting these goals means that SREB states must continue to raise the quality of education students receive at all levels, close achievement gaps, vastly improve high school graduation rates, and increase the numbers of adults who complete postsecondary degrees and certificates.

SREB is governed by a Board of five members from each of the 16 states: the governor and four gubernatorial appointees (including at least one state legislator and one educator), who serve four-year, staggered terms. Each state is represented on the Executive Committee, which can act for the Board between meetings. The SREB Legislative Advisory Council includes legislators from each state and is the largest standing committee advising the Board.

**Alabama Board and Legislative Advisory Council members**

Board terms for appointed members expire June 30 of the specified year. Board members are: Governor Robert Bentley; Joseph B. Morton, state superintendent of education (2012); Caroline Novak, president, A+ Education Partnership (2014); Sandra Sims-deGraffenried, retired executive director, Alabama Association of School Boards (2011); and a vacancy (2013). Senator Vivian Davis Figures serves on the Legislative Advisory Council as a governor-appointed member.
Where does financial support come from?

Basic operating support comes from annual appropriations from each member state, but the bulk of the operating budget of more than $43 million includes funds from foundations and federal sources. In addition, SREB administers the Regional Contract Program for students in medicine, dentistry, optometry, veterinary medicine, osteopathic medicine and other fields. The operating budget for the Regional Contract Program is approximately $12 million.

Preparing for college and careers

Building a well-educated and well-trained work force is a top state priority. National research suggests that most states need to increase dramatically the number of degrees and postsecondary certificates required to meet economic development and work force needs — some estimates place this gap at nearly eight million nationally. SREB’s special projects on college readiness and college completion help states address these concerns.

SREB’s college- and career-readiness agenda outlines specific steps to establish or expand a statewide readiness initiative. With a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2008, SREB’s State College and Career Readiness Initiative has supported efforts in six states — Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia — to ensure that all students leave high school prepared for college courses and the workplace. A critical first step was to adopt a single set of statewide college- and career-readiness standards in reading and math. SREB helped each state examine its standards and senior-year curricula and worked with each to ensure that end-of-course exams measure whether students meet the standards. Most states are now looking at curricular changes so that students unprepared for college-level work have access to senior-year transitional courses in math and English/language arts and can master these skills before leaving high school. The states also are tackling the difficult task of helping teachers know the standards and incorporate them into the classroom.

Reports and other products of this initiative are available on SREB’s College and Career Readiness Web pages:
- Individual progress reports for the six states
- Statewide Transitional Courses for College Readiness
- “Teacher Development to Increase College and Career Readiness” — a set of state guidelines and promising practices
- Video clips of state leaders’ comments on their college-readiness work

The Gates Foundation awarded SREB a new planning grant to explore ways to continue this work.

SREB’s College Completion Initiative centers on success in degree and certificate completion. Nationally, less than 60 percent of degree-seeking, full-time freshmen in public four-year institutions graduate in six years with a bachelor’s degree. To highlight this problem and identify solutions, SREB released Promoting a Culture of Student Success: How Colleges and Universities Are Improving Degree Completion (2010), to show how public higher education institutions can help more students earn bachelor’s degrees. SREB also released No Time to Waste: Policy Recommendations for Increasing College Completion (2010), which challenges states to work toward a bold goal: To increase significantly the numbers of students who complete postsecondary career certificates and associate’s and bachelor’s degrees. The report calls on states to set a statewide priority and direction to:
- increase students’ access to higher education.
- increase the rates at which students complete postsecondary education at all levels.
- make the path to degrees and certificates more cost-efficient, both for the student and the state.

Ten broad recommendations provide a framework to make college completion a top priority. These projects are geared toward stronger academic preparation and higher college-completion rates, which are critical to SREB states’ future prosperity.

Several states also participated in a regional conference SREB co-sponsored (with Jobs for the Future) to examine college-completion issues.
SREB’s central focus is helping member states meet the Challenge to Lead Goals for Education. The set of 12 goals, adopted in 2002, begins with an ambitious statement: “SREB states can lead the nation in educational progress.” To do this, students at every level must be ready to learn: in first grade, the middle grades, high school, college and the workplace. Schools and colleges must close gaps in academic achievement among groups of students. And every state must ensure that its educational agencies and institutions work together as a single system so that students can transition smoothly from one level to the next.

SREB completed the first series of 12 reports on the Challenge to Lead goals — one per goal — by 2006. Since then, SREB has issued many other goals and focus reports on topics related to the goals.

SREB also has issued four sets of customized, biennial state progress reports that highlight the progress of individual SREB states in meeting the goals, point out significant improvements by most SREB states in many areas, and make recommendations on next steps to pursue. Under the theme Moving Ahead, the latest set of state progress reports was issued in June 2010. Other recent reports include:

- A Smart Move in Tough Times: How SREB States Can Strengthen Adult Learning and the Work Force
- Measuring Success by Degrees: The Status of College Completion in SREB States
- Strengthening Attend ‘n’ Drive Laws to Reduce Truancy and Dropouts
- Look for upcoming reports on effective data use, dual enrollment, teacher effectiveness and other topics. All reports are available at www.sreb.org.

**Charting states’ educational progress**

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**Encouraging more students to stay in school**

SREB’s Go Alliance is a partnership of SREB states that share marketing strategies to encourage more students — particularly minority students and those from low-income families — to complete high school and go to college.

Representatives from SREB states meet each fall, and the Go Alliance hosts a workshop series that provides professional development in college access marketing strategies. The series has focused on general campaign planning, evaluation strategies, engaging community-based organizations, and using “new media” (media other than radio and TV) to reach students. Go Alliance owns and manages the national College Access Marketing website, and www.goallianceonline.org is hosted within this site. These sites help states save dollars and time by producing, replicating and sharing marketing ideas that urge students to pursue further education.

Go Alliance has provided technical assistance to SREB states in implementing their federal, noncompetitive College Access Challenge Grants (CACG). Six states, with Go Alliance, used CACG funds to build three professional development training modules for middle grades and high school counselors to promote high school completion and college access among students. (A fourth is under development.) The online, trainer-facilitated modules are fully implemented in those states, have been enthusiastically received and currently are being evaluated.

**Improving schools**

SREB’s High Schools That Work (HSTW) program works in partnership with states, districts and schools to provide professional development, technical assistance, coaching, assessments, surveys and materials that support comprehensive high school reform. These services are aimed at ensuring more students complete a college-ready academic core combined with a high-quality career/technical (CT) or academic concentration, so more students are prepared for college, advanced training and careers.

Active in 1,200 schools in 30 network states and the District of Columbia, HSTW is America’s largest high school improvement effort. Alabama has 36 schools in the network.
Alabama state, district and school leaders and teachers participated in a variety of SREB’s professional development opportunities in 2010-2011, including Technical Assistance Visits, national workshops, site-based workshops, the HSTW Staff Development Conference and the State Leaders’ Forum. SREB continued to provide on-site coaching and comprehensive training through partnerships with the Alabama State Department of Education to support five schools, with Mobile County Public Schools to support 11 schools and with Dothan City Public Schools to support two schools. A new partnership with Baldwin County Public Schools includes seven high schools that receive on-site coaching, leadership training and literacy training. Alabama high school graduates who participated in the 2010 HSTW Assessment are completing the Follow-Up Survey of Graduates about how prepared they were for their next step after high school.

Through its Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW) program, SREB works with states, districts and schools to ensure more students leave the middle grades prepared for rigorous high school studies and, ultimately, for postsecondary studies, careers and responsible citizenship. SREB supports more than 450 MMGW schools in 23 states with professional development, technical assistance, coaching, assessments and surveys. More than 100 Alabama schools participate in the MMGW network through state workshops, site-based professional development and webinars. Dothan City’s four middle grades schools and Mobile County’s 20 middle grades schools continue to receive professional development and on-site coaching in 2010-2011 through contracted services. Baldwin County’s recently initiated partnership includes professional development and on-site coaching for 10 middle grades schools.

SREB’s Technology Centers That Work (TCTW) assists shared-time technical centers to raise academic and technical achievement and to improve collaboration with sending high schools to prepare students for both careers and further studies. Since the initiative began in 2007, the network has grown to nearly 160 sites in 17 states. In 2010-2011, Alabama’s eight TCTW centers participated in literacy, culture and data workshops to support school improvement.

In 2009-2010, Alabama joined SREB’s five-year, 11-state Preparation for Tomorrow (PFT) consor-
tium. Through PFT, each state will design a sequence of four CT courses in a high-wage, high-skill career field that is important to the state’s economy. These courses, built around authentic project units, will teach related Common Core academic standards through real-world projects. Each course will include end-of-project and end-of-course assessments that measure both academic and technical achievement. SREB and consortium states will provide training to enable CT teachers, math and science teachers, principals and counselors to implement and teach the courses effectively. Collaborating states will share the curricula and accompanying assessment and training materials. As a member of the consortium, Alabama is developing a four-course sequence in aerospace engineering. In fall 2011, at least four schools will field-test the curricula for the two foundation courses, and the state will begin developing the two advanced courses.

SREB’s Learning-Centered Leadership Program (LCLP) works with states to redesign school leadership preparation systems and certification policies and conducts research on school leadership topics to inform practices and policies. The LCLP also helps states, districts and schools design succession plans for principals and improve training for principals so that they are able and ready to improve schools. To support current and aspiring school leaders and leadership teams, the program develops and provides both face-to-face and online training on strategies for effective instructional leadership.

SREB and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) partnered with the Alabama State Department of Education and the Jefferson County School District to field-test Take One! as an innovative school improvement model. More than 200 teachers and administrators in an eight-school feeder pattern completed one component of the National Board Teacher Certification assessment.

Alabama state education leaders worked closely with SREB and NBPTS to recruit exceptional Alabama principals to participate in a two-year field test of the National Board Certification of Accomplished Principals assessment. Alabama leaders also participated in SREB’s 2011 Leadership Forum, which focused on realizing the vision of school leaders who can raise student achievement.
The most current comparative information for state leaders on colleges

For 42 years the annual SREB-State Data Exchange has provided Alabama officials in government and higher education with timely, comparative information on postsecondary education enrollments, state and local appropriations, faculty salaries and benefits, degrees awarded, student persistence and progression toward graduation, tuition and fees, and higher education revenues. Most recently, comparisons on e-learning, college credits taken by high school students, and time- and credits-to-degree have been added. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education furnishes campus-by-campus information to the Data Exchange. States use Data Exchange information in planning and coordinating activities, in making budget decisions about higher education and in setting tuition and fees. The Data Exchange also enables states to work together to develop new interstate comparisons to measure progress.

The biennial SREB Fact Book on Higher Education (to be released in summer 2011) has been a standard reference for policy-makers since 1956. The Fact Book provides information on national, regional and 50-state trends in population, schools, the economy, enrollments, degrees awarded, student finance, college budgeting, and salaries and benefits for faculty and administrators. State leaders and planners who access the Fact Book online can see trends graphically highlighted and retrieve the latest updates.

Fact Book Bulletins update and emphasize key items, and SREB also publishes customized state Featured Facts reports. The “Education Data” section at www.sreb.org gives states access to SREB’s extensive databases and comparative reports.

SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program: Creating a Pipeline of Qualified Professors in Alabama

For 18 years, SREB states have supported the nationally recognized SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program. The program demonstrates what states and institutions can accomplish when they share resources and work together toward a common goal: to increase the number of minority faculty members on college and university campuses. The program has produced more than 560 Ph.D. graduates and currently supports more than 300 Ph.D. candidates.

The program is one of the most successful of its kind in the country. It has a retention/graduation rate of almost 90 percent — about double the national average. By mentoring and other support, the program also decreases the time it takes to earn a Ph.D. More than 80 percent of program graduates work in an academic setting, more than 70 percent are employed in SREB states, and 52 have achieved tenure.

Alabama continues to lead the region with a total of 131 supported scholars and 81 graduates. Alabama currently employs 40 program graduates — more than any other participating state.

Using technology to improve teaching and increase learning

The SREB Educational Technology Cooperative brings together state-level technology leaders representing more than 3,400 school districts and nearly 800 two- and four-year postsecondary institutions across the 16 SREB states. The Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education are members.

Now in its 16th year as a nationally recognized leader in educational technology, the Cooperative communicates research and trends, collaborates across states, and catalyzes projects and educational technology policy leadership. It has published more than 60 updates for state policy- and decision-makers. The Cooperative addresses ongoing and emerging technology issues through conferences and other events for its member network; provides innovative websites with the information that state leaders, educators and online teachers need; and assists with state planning, helping members identify opportunities and obstacles.
The SREB-State Virtual Schools initiative helps
states work together to share information on policy
and finance issues and ensure quality online teaching
and courses. State progress is updated in the annual
SREB Report on State Virtual Schools, and the Coop-
erative also published the nation’s first Standards for
Quality Online Teaching — which have been adapted
nationally and internationally — plus Standards for
Quality Online Courses and Guidelines for Professional
Development for Online Teachers.

The Cooperative is especially active in quality
professional development for online teachers — help-
ing improve teaching and student learning through the
use of the Web, guidelines and materials. In 2009, the
Cooperative established the SREB/iNACOL National
Online Teacher of the Year program for K-12 online
teachers. In partnership with the International
Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL),
the program recognized its second awardee, Kristin
Kipp of Colorado, in March 2011. The Cooperative
also co-sponsored the Online Learning Institute with
the International Society for Technology in Education
(ISTE) and the Educational Development Center at
the ISTE conference in June 2011.

The 2011 Annual Symposium on Teaching and
Learning focused on what it takes to conceive and
achieve high-quality virtual learning experiences.
With funding from the National Science Foundation,
the Cooperative is developing SREB/NSDL Backpack
— a student portal to the National Science Digital
Library (NSDL). By providing direct access to more
than $100 million worth of digital STEM (science,
technology, engineering and mathematics) content,
the Backpack will increase the ability of students to
succeed in classroom and science competition settings.
Gaining Online Accessibility Learning Through
Self-Study (GOALS), funded by the Fund for the
Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE),
enables students with disabilities to use Internet-based
resources.

The Electronic Campus, one of the nation’s leading
distance learning initiatives, enables students to
pursue college studies on the Internet and across state
lines. It provides online access to more than 30,000
courses and 1,000 degree programs from colleges and
universities throughout the SREB region and now
offers a wider range of services, especially for adults
and e-learners. Users easily reach specialized services
such as online applications, financial aid, career plan-
ning, and searches for courses and programs. It also
provides opportunities to help persons of any age who
need a college course, degree program or additional
education/training to get or keep a job. Visit the

The SREB-State Teacher Center, part of the
Electronic Campus, provides one-stop access to courses,
programs, services and information for the nearly
2.5 million educators in SREB states. It offers direct
links to state departments of education and certifica-
tion/licensure agencies, alternative paths to teaching
in each state, and professional development opportu-
nities, among other services. Visit the SREB-State
Teacher Center at www.TheTeacherCenter.org.

The Academic Common Market/Electronic
Campus (ACM/EC) program combines the best of
two SREB programs and enables students in SREB
states to enroll in selected online degree programs
offered by institutions outside of their home states —
but at in-state tuition rates. More than 81 degree
programs are available, and nearly 121 students were
certified by their home states for study during the past
year. The program provides working adults with the
flexibility and affordability they need to earn a degree.
Visit the ACM/EC at http://home.sreb.org/acm/
ecinitiatives/acmintroduction.asp.

With support from Lumina Foundation for
Education, SREB will launch TheAdultLearner.org
site in 2011. This regional (and later, national) portal
will build on efforts under way in several SREB states
to reach the more than 20 million working adults ages
25 to 55 in the region who have some college credit
but never completed a degree. The portal will help
them access specialized degree-completion programs
and services designed to meet their needs.

The Distance Learning Policy Laboratory
remains an important forum for member states to
review and develop policies for expanding distance
learning. SREB’s aim is to increase access to high-
quality, affordable postsecondary education by iden-
tifying barriers to distance learning; to support the
development of innovative programs to test distance
learning models and interstate partnerships; and to
encourage colleges, universities and legislatures to
make necessary policy changes. A current focus is
helping states respond to changes in federal regulations
that require institutions with online programs to have
approval in states where they enroll students. SREB is working closely with states to monitor changes and to promote reciprocal agreements, which have been in place since the creation of the Electronic Campus.

SREB’s “free trade zone” will be a model for other regions as these new regulations are enacted. Visit the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory at www.sreb.org.

■ States and students save money as SREB helps
   Alabama residents earn specialized college degrees

What happens to residents of your state who want to earn undergraduate, graduate or professional degrees — such as broadcast meteorology, nursing practice or osteopathic medicine — but must leave the state to study these programs? Can they afford out-of-state tuition to pursue the programs they have dreamed about that are not offered in Alabama? Two longstanding SREB programs can help.

The Regional Contract Program makes it possible for Alabama residents to enroll in selected professional degree programs in other SREB states when those programs have limited enrollment or may not be available in the state. Other SREB states can contract with Alabama’s Auburn University and Tuskegee University (in veterinary medicine) and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (in dentistry and optometry) to secure entry into those professional programs. For providing these contract services, these Alabama institutions currently receive more than $5 million from other SREB states. SREB is the fiscal agent for the Regional Contract Program and handles administrative duties for the states.

The Academic Common Market (ACM) enables Alabama residents to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees in programs of study available in other SREB states, but not in their home state, at in-state tuition rates. Both the states and students save significantly: States save the cost of creating specialized programs, and students save by paying in-state tuition for ACM programs. Through the ACM and the ACM/EC, Alabama residents have access to 333 programs, including 19 online programs, in other SREB states. Alabama institutions offer 170 programs, including two online programs, to residents of other SREB states.

■ Preparing the nurses and nurse educators that SREB states need

Thirteen of Alabama’s college-based nursing programs are members of the SREB Council on Collegiate Education for Nursing. The Council — unique in America — enables nurse educators to address trends in nursing education and health care. The theme for the annual meeting in November 2011 is “Digital Wisdom in Nursing Education.” The University of Alabama at Birmingham is one of nine institutions in the SREB Nurse Educator Consortium offering teacher preparation courses for graduate students and novice faculty. Doreen Harper (University of Alabama at Birmingham) serves on the Council’s governing board.

■ Legislators play major roles

Legislative involvement in SREB is extensive:

- Legislators serve as members and officers of the Board.
- Legislators are members of the Board’s Executive Committee.
- Legislators are members of the Board’s Finance Committee, which is chaired by the treasurer, who is a legislator.
- Legislators also serve on other SREB program committees, panels and task groups.
The SREB Legislative Advisory Council is the largest standing advisory body to the Board. The Council advises the Board on legislative matters, serves as a permanent steering committee for the annual Legislative Work Conference and sponsors special seminars on timely topics.

Senator Jack Westwood, Kentucky, Chair
Representative Jeannie McDaniel, Oklahoma, Vice Chair

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Thomas W. Campbell, State Delegate, Lewisburg, West Virginia
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John ‘Bam’ Carney, State Representative, Campobello, Kentucky
Jared Carpenter, State Senator, Berea, Kentucky
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Jack Hill, State Senator, Reidsville, Georgia
Sheila Ellis Hixson, State Delegate, Silver Spring, Maryland
R. Edward Houck, State Senator, Spotsylvania, Virginia
Jimmy Jeffress, State Senator, Crossett, Arkansas
Linda P. Johnson, State Representative, Kannapolis, North Carolina
Jan Jones, Speaker Pro Tempore of the House, Alpharetta, Georgia
Edward J. Kasemeyer, State Senator, Arbutus, Maryland
Richard C. Lerblance, State Senator, Hartshorne, Oklahoma
Gerald Long, State Senator, Winnfield, Louisiana
Evelyn J. Lynn, State Senator, Ormond Beach, Florida
Eric Mansfield, State Senator, Fayetteville, North Carolina
John W. Matthews Jr., State Senator, Bowman, South Carolina
Jeannie McDaniel, State Representative, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Geanie W. Morrison, State Representative, Victoria, Texas
Martin L. Nesbitt Jr., State Senator, Asheville, North Carolina
Ben W. Nevers, State Senator, Bogalusa, Louisiana
Susan Paddock, State Senator, Ada, Oklahoma
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Frederick M. Quayle, State Senator, Suffolk, Virginia
Jody Richards, State Representative, Bowling Green, Kentucky
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Nikki G. Setzler, State Senator, West Columbia, South Carolina
Florence Shapiro, State Senator, Plano, Texas
Timothy T. Shaughnessy, State Senator, Louisville, Kentucky
Jabar Shumate, State Senator, Louisville, Kentucky
Senator Jack Westwood, Kentucky, Chair
Representative Jeannie McDaniel, Oklahoma, Vice Chair

The Southern Regional Education Board states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.