

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 and adult learning. 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. Today, the organization continues to focus on improving quality of life by advancing public education.

SREB helps states focus on what works in both policy and practice. We draw on our expertise in policy and research to advise state leaders on key education issues. We track and report progress,

state by state, on important benchmarks. We bring together member states to forge consensus and work together on initiatives that would not be possible alone.

SREB programs and services help states implement best practices. School improvement services work directly with public schools to improve instruction, student achievement and school leadership. A cooperative helps teachers, professors and state education officials realize the promise of technology. Access programs help students reduce out-of-state tuition, find online programs, and navigate the path to — and through — college and career training.

■ SREB Board and Legislative Advisory Council members

The governor and four gubernatorial appointees (at least one state legislator and one educator) serve four-year, staggered terms on the Board. Each state is represented on the Executive Committee, which can act for the Board between meetings. The SREB Legislative Advisory Council, composed of legislators from each state, is the largest standing committee advising the Board.

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.

Board terms for appointed members expire June 30 of the specified year. Alabama Board members are: Governor Robert Bentley; Representative Alan Baker (2013); Thomas B. Bice, state superintendent of education (2016); Jackie Kinney, Federal Programs director, Morgan County Schools (2015); and Caroline Novak, president, A+ Education Partnership (2014). As a legislative member of the Board, Representative Baker serves on the Legislative Advisory Council. Senator Vivian Davis Figures and Representatives Terri Collins, Chad Fincher and Mary Sue McClurkin serve on the Legislative Advisory Council as governor-appointed members.

■ 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 \$47 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 student success in college and careers

To meet economic development and workforce demands, member states have intensified efforts to increase the numbers and kinds of college degrees and postsecondary career certificates students earn. Two SREB special projects help states address these concerns through public policy and programmatic actions.

With grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation, SREB's **State College and Career Readiness Initiative** and the **College Completion Initiative** support SREB states to ensure that students leaving high school are prepared for college courses and the workplace and have greater opportunities to complete a degree or certificate.

SREB continued to implement comprehensive statewide college-readiness initiatives throughout the SREB region in 2012. With support from a three-year grant from the Gates Foundation, SREB advanced college and career readiness by:

1. developing indicators of implementation of the Common Core State Standards (or other rigorous standards) and benchmarking reports against those indicators for most SREB states and selected states outside the region.
2. supporting Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Oklahoma — as well as five non-SREB states — in designing and implementing model statewide, 12th-grade mathematics and disciplinary literacy transitional courses to improve students' college readiness.
3. developing a model statewide Career and Technical Education pathway in a STEM sector that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

4. expanding statewide scaling of innovative literacy and math strategies in Arkansas.
5. working with state education agencies and legislators to understand and apply the latest research on educator effectiveness to their own state policies.

Generous grants from the Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation supported SREB's College Completion Initiative in 2012. By convening regional working groups of legislators and focus groups with representatives from K-12 and postsecondary education in consensus-building, issue-based meetings, SREB identified the essential elements of effective state policy on a number of actions that impact students' success in completing a degree or certificate in a timely manner. Issue areas developed in 2012 included college readiness, outcomes-based funding, transfer, credits-and time-to-degree, returning students and accelerated options (e.g., AP, dual enrollment and prior learning assessment). SREB also provided technical assistance to Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina and West Virginia on college completion issues.

This work builds on recommendations from SREB's report *No Time to Waste: Policy Recommendations for Increasing College Completion*, which challenges states to increase significantly the numbers of students who complete certificates and associate's and bachelor's degrees. Across both initiatives in 2012, SREB worked with regional and national organizations, as well as leaders throughout the 16 SREB states, to increase legislative and gubernatorial understanding and engagement on key policies that impact readiness and completion. These initiatives will continue to be a priority for SREB.

■ Charting states' educational progress

A central focus of SREB is helping member states meet the *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education. In spring 2012, the *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education from the past decade were reissued with a fresh format and refined outcome measures to reflect recommendations from Board commissions and goals reports. The six new ***Challenge to Lead 2020*** goals, adopted in 2013, continue SREB states' mission to "lead the nation in educational progress" and set targets (called outcome measures) for each level in the education pipeline.

SREB will report on the six *Challenge* goals to show states the progress they are making on the outcome measures associated with the goals and on implementation of the policies that regional leaders identified as essential to meeting the goals. SREB also issues customized, biennial state progress reports that highlight

the progress of each individual SREB state and recommend next steps to pursue. Under the theme *A Decade of Progress*, 16 state progress reports were issued in June 2012. All reports are available at www.sreb.org.

Others include:

- *Challenge to Lead 2020* Goals for Education
- *Federal Waivers Grant Flexibility to No Child Left Behind in SREB States*
- *Reaching Higher Ground: SREB States Outpace U.S. Growth in High School Graduation Rates*
- *SREB States Lead the Nation in Progress on NAEP*
- *High School to College and Careers 2013*
- *SREB States Transform School Accountability with NCLB Waivers*

■ Encouraging more students to plan for and apply to college

Go Alliance is a multistate cooperative that strives to boost enrollment and completion rates of students who would be the first in their families to enroll in postsecondary education. Services focus on: 1) college access policy; 2) programs that help students prepare for and apply to college; and 3) communications strategies that inform and motivate them to attend.

In 2013, *Go Alliance* completed its Next Generation of Student Supports grant from Lumina Foundation to identify how to use technology to help students in the college application process. Student focus groups across the country revealed that paying for college — particularly, completing the FAFSA — was the biggest barrier. SREB staff developed several recommendations, including suggestions for improving college access

websites and creating a mobile app for FAFSA assistance.

Go Alliance hosts an annual meeting and a workshop series that provide professional development for members. Topics in 2013 included "non-cognitive" skills needed for college and careers; program evaluation; college access campaigning; financial aid counseling; and adult learner outreach, among others. *Go Alliance* also provides technical assistance to SREB states implementing federal College Access Challenge Grants.

Nine SREB states, including Alabama, now use a program developed and managed by *Go Alliance* that trains middle grades and high school counselors in college advising.

■ Improving Alabama schools

SREB's ***High Schools That Work (HSTW)*** program is America's largest high school improvement effort. It partners with states to provide professional development, technical assistance, coaching, research and assessments, and materials that support comprehensive high school reform. These services aim to ensure more students complete rigorous career pathway programs of study joined with a college-ready academic

core, so that more students are prepared for college, advanced training and careers. More than 3,000 high schools have benefited directly from *HSTW*. Alabama currently has 20 active schools in the network.

Alabama state, district and school leaders and teachers participated in many of *HSTW*'s professional development opportunities in 2012-2013, including site development workshops, Technical Assistance Visits,

national and site-based workshops, the *HSTW* Staff Development Conference and the State Leaders' Forum. SREB continued to provide on-site coaching and comprehensive training with the state's 20 network school sites and Mobile County Public Schools to support seven schools, with Dothan City Public Schools to support seven schools, and with Lowndes County Public Schools to support two schools. Four new sites in Alabama joined the state network of schools. Twelve Alabama high schools and technology centers participated in the 2012 *HSTW* Assessment.

SREB's ***Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW)*** program works with more than 490 schools in 20 states to ensure more students are prepared for rigorous high school studies and, ultimately, for postsecondary studies and careers. Approximately 100 Alabama schools, including five schools new to the network, participate. Dothan City's four middle grades schools and three middle grades schools from Mobile County received professional development and on-site coaching in 2012-2013. Baldwin County's partnership included professional development in leadership and literacy and on-site coaching for 10 middle grades schools. The partnership with Lowndes County included two middle grades schools. Thirty-six middle grades schools participated in the 2012 *MMGW* Student and Teacher Surveys. Nine schools participated in a follow-up study that was the first to compare students' achievement on their state assessment with the classroom and school-related experiences they reported in survey responses. SREB is working to implement the SREB Middle Grades Commission's report on accelerating learning in the middle grades so that more students are ready for challenging high school studies.

SREB's ***Technology Centers That Work (TCTW)*** program assists nearly 200 shared-time technical centers in 18 states to raise academic and technical achievement so that students are better prepared for both postsecondary studies and careers. In 2012-2013, Alabama's five existing *TCTW* centers plus four new sites participated in school coaching, the *HSTW* Assessment, the National *TCTW* Leaders' Forum and other workshops to boost school improvement. This year, SREB's *TCTW* team conducted reviews of all 49 shared-time centers in Alabama and prepared a report for the state career/technical education director on the state of the facilities' training equipment and program offerings.

Alabama also is part of SREB's **Advanced Career** consortium to develop a sequence of four courses in high-skill, high-wage career fields important to the state's economy. Alabama's courses are in aerospace engineering. Alabama is collaborating with SREB to train teachers, principals and counselors to implement and assess effectiveness. All consortium states will share the curricula and accompanying materials.

SREB's **Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and Mathematics Design Collaborative (MDC) Programs**, with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, use the foundation's college- and career-ready tools to assist schools in training teachers how to use the strategies and best practices of implementing the Common Core State Standards or other rigorous standards in literacy and mathematics into middle grades and high schools. SREB has developed 21 literacy trainers who are providing 1,715 days of coaching and/or professional development to 166 schools in 20 states. SREB has 16 mathematics trainers who are providing 1,724 days of coaching and/or professional development to 175 schools in 20 states.

Seven schools each in Dothan and Mobile have received the LDC and MDC college- and career-ready tools and training.

SREB's **Learning-Centered Leadership Program** works with states to redesign school leadership preparation and certification systems, and it helps states, districts and schools design succession plans for principals and enrich training so that principals can improve schools. The program also provides face-to-face and online training on strategies for effective leadership.

In 2012, SREB and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) continued their three-year-long partnership with the Jefferson County School District to field-test the Take One! program as an innovative school improvement model. More than 200 teachers and administrators completed one component of the National Board Teacher Certification assessment.

The Alabama State Department of Education began implementing a Principal Candidate Semester Residency program and has partnered with SREB to measure the effectiveness of a full semester residency vs. two to six weeks.

Alabama state education leaders worked with SREB and NBPTS to recruit exceptional Alabama principals to participate in an 18-month pilot of the

National Board Certification of Accomplished Principals assessment. Fifteen principals are participating. No one has yet been certified, since scoring is still under way. Alabama leaders also participated in

SREB's 2013 Leadership Forum on what principals need to know about the Common Core State Standards and how they can improve teaching.

■ The most current comparative information for state leaders on colleges

For 44 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, revenue from tuition and fees, faculty salaries, degrees awarded, student persistence and progression toward graduation, tuition and fees charged. Most recently, comparisons on e-learning, college credits taken by high school students, share of graduates transferring in, 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 again in 2013, 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, college enrollments, degrees awarded, student finance, college budgeting, and salaries for faculty and administrators. State leaders and planners who access the *Fact Book* online can see trends graphically highlighted and retrieve the latest updates. SREB also publishes customized state *Featured Facts* reports based on the *Fact Book*. Periodic **Fact Book Bulletins** update and emphasize key items, and the "Education Data" section at www.sreb.org gives states access to SREB's extensive databases and comparative reports. See www.sreb.org/data.

■ Celebrating 20 years of helping increase faculty diversity and minority Ph.D. production

Since 1993, the **SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program** has helped to increase the numbers of minority faculty and minority members with Ph.D.s throughout the region. Through professional development, mentoring, financial assistance and other services, it helps students earn advanced degrees and prepare to become college and university faculty members. By funding the program, SREB states work more cost effectively, share resources and achieve a more diverse faculty than each state could accomplish alone. To date, the program has produced more than 650 Ph.D. graduates and currently supports a pipeline of more than 360 Ph.D. scholars.

Nationally recognized, the SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program is one of the most successful programs of its kind. Its retention/graduation rate (almost 90 percent) is roughly double the national average for minority students. The program also decreases the time it takes to earn a Ph.D. More than 90 percent of

program graduates work in an academic setting, more than 70 percent are employed in SREB states, and over 75 have achieved tenure.

As a participant in the program, Alabama continues to lead the region with a total of 147 supported scholars and 93 graduates. Alabama also has employed 75 program graduates, more than any other participating state. Fifteen graduates have earned tenure.

Each year the central event of the program is the Compact for Faculty Diversity Institute on Teaching and Mentoring, the nation's largest gathering of minority Ph.D. scholars seeking faculty careers. More than 1,000 scholars, their mentors and nationally recognized experts meet for intellectual collaboration and further development of critical skills required for outstanding teaching, mentoring and research. This October the Institute will celebrate 20 years of providing services to scholars participating in the SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program.

■ Using technology to improve teaching and increase learning

The **SREB Educational Technology Cooperative** connects and convenes state-level technology leaders representing more than 3,500 school districts and nearly 800 two- and four-year postsecondary institutions across the 16 SREB states.

Now in its 18th year as a nationally recognized leader in educational technology, the Cooperative brings together thought leaders at all levels of the education pipeline — from pre-K through higher education and workforce training — to leverage current and evolving technologies to boost teaching and learning in the region and nation.

The Cooperative helps states and districts share information on policy and finance issues and ensure quality online teaching, courses and programs. To that end, the Cooperative Representatives have identified the 10 technology issues that they believe policy-makers in SREB states need to address now. The Cooperative has organized a Top 10 Educational Technology Issues Process, K-20 in scope, to help states understand the issues and turn them into policy decisions and an action agenda.

Its February 2013 report — *Trends in State-Run Virtual Schools in the SREB Region* — examines the increasing opportunities for K-12 students and other trends in quality assurance and access to technology among the SREB states. The Cooperative also published the nation's first *Standards for Quality Online Teaching* and *Standards for Quality Online Courses* — both of which have been adapted nationally and internationally — as well as *Guidelines for Professional Development for Online Teachers*.

The Cooperative is active in professional development for online teachers and helps improve teaching and student learning through the use of the Web, guidelines and materials. In partnership with the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), it also manages the annual SREB/iNACOL **National Online Teacher of the Year (NOTY)** award program for K-12 online teachers. The NOTY awardee is recognized for excellence in online teaching and represents that expertise at more than 30 state, regional and national events and activities through the year. The 2013 NOTY awardee is Renee Citlau, a lead online teacher for the Anaheim Union High School District in California.

The 2013 K-20 Symposium on Teaching and Learning (held in March in Atlanta, Georgia) featured a keynote address from Richard Culatta, acting director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology, as well as presentations on Georgia Tech's massive open online courses, Internet2's K-20 initiative, and predictive analytics and big data.

Giving students greater access to postsecondary education is a key mission of SREB. 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 nearly 1,800 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 can easily reach specialized services such as online applications, financial aid, career planning, 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 www.ElectronicCampus.org.

The **Academic Common Market/Electronic Campus (ACM/EC)** program combines the best of two SREB programs. It enables college 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 76 degree programs are available, and nearly 115 students were certified by their home states for study during the past year. The program is especially valuable to working adults who need greater flexibility and affordability to earn a degree. Visit <http://home.sreb.org/acm/ecinitiatives/acmintroductio.asp>.

With support from Lumina Foundation, SREB also launched **TheAdultLearner.org** site. 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 states to review and develop policies to expand distance learning. SREB's aim is to increase access to high-quality, affordable postsecondary education by identifying 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 Regional Reciprocity Agreement (SECRRRA) will be a model for other regions as 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 optometry — 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 long-standing SREB programs can help.

The **Regional Contract Program** makes it possible for residents of other states to 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 326 programs, including 14 online programs, in other SREB states. Alabama institutions offer 146 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 2013 is "Assuring Educational Quality and Relevance: Pedagogies for Changing Times." University of Alabama at Birmingham is one of eight institutions in the SREB

Nurse Educator Consortium offering online teacher preparation courses for graduate students and novice faculty. Doris Holeman (Tuskegee University) is a member of the Council's governing board. Nurse educators in each of the SREB states are participating in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Regional Action coalitions as part of The Future of Nursing Campaign for Action initiative.

Legislative Advisory Council

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.

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Senator F. Gary Simpson, Delaware, Vice Chair

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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.