

# SREB

## State College and Career Readiness Initiative



### Overview

In May 2008, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided funding to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in support of a multi-year project to help several southern states improve students' college/career readiness. The project is called the Strengthening Statewide College/Career Readiness Initiative (SSCRI). Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia participate in the project.

Research shows the global economy demands a more highly skilled workforce than ever before. To ensure economic and social prosperity, the nation must graduate more students from high school and have all graduates ready to begin college study, career preparation or on-the-job training. However, no state has completed a comprehensive statewide initiative to improve students' college/career readiness, despite some progress in a few states.

Most states have begun efforts to improve students' college/career readiness without adequate recognition among state leaders and policy-makers of the size and nature of the readiness problem and without addressing the many complexities in solving the problem statewide. 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 will ensure other important state priorities are protected — such as college access and admissions and increased high school graduation rates. Meeting the readiness challenge on a statewide scale requires: a comprehensive action agenda that includes specific goals, the involvement of all key education and political stakeholders, a plan for implementation, and supporting state policies.

SREB's college/career readiness initiative is designed to help SREB states accelerate progress in implementing statewide initiatives to improve students' college/career readiness. Project activities are anchored and guided by an extensive SREB evaluation of each state's existing readiness efforts; the evaluation is based on SREB's model readiness "action agenda" of promising practices in the field. Involving a wide range of state educational and political leaders, this evaluation itself raises awareness of the readiness challenge and how each state can address the challenge. The evaluation results are to be used to build a comprehensive, yet specific action agenda for each state and to develop detailed implementation plans to carry out the agenda — while overcoming obstacles that hampered past efforts to improve students' college and career readiness. This project also identifies areas in which SREB can assist states in implementing state readiness initiatives. This work includes statewide standards adoption, state assessment policy, the strengthening of the high school senior year, and teacher preparation activities.