

## What States Are Doing

*Making Opportunity Affordable* (MOA) is a multi-year initiative focused on increasing productivity within U.S. higher education, particularly at two- and four-year public colleges and universities. The aim is to use dollars invested by students, parents and taxpayers to graduate more students. Eleven states have been selected by Lumina Foundation for Education to receive \$150,000 grants to develop innovative strategies in key policy areas to promote sustainable improvements in productivity. The states will be eligible to compete next year for up to five, \$2-million Opportunity Grants to implement their plans over four years. Following is a description of what states plan to do during this initial learning year along with contact information for each state.

### ARIZONA

Arizona's higher education environment currently does not have sufficient diversity to provide for the range of postsecondary education needs in the state. With this investment from Lumina, state leaders will work to design a more robust, cost-effective system. Arizona will focus its Making Opportunity Affordable grant on expanding options currently being piloted at our higher education institutions where students can earn bachelor degree credits while enrolled jointly at a university and community college.

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#### ABOUT MAKING OPPORTUNITY AFFORDABLE

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## CALIFORNIA

During the learning year, the California team will implement a two-pronged strategy. With the longer-range objective of influencing state policymakers to incentivize the production of increased numbers of baccalaureate degree recipients, the California State College (CSU) System will organize and mobilize “Business Champions” across the state to play a significant, high-profile role in communicating the escalating need for degree-holders in areas of workforce need, especially in knowledge-based fields such as math and science. Secondly, CSU will dedicate substantial grant resources to conduct a deep and wide analysis of student flow – including examination of student patterns of attendance, credit accumulation, experience with academic “bottleneck” experiences, and academic performance – in order to identify where and how students become at risk and fail, as well as to determine which efforts might offer the largest return in increasing instructional productivity.

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## COLORADO

Colorado sees the Making Opportunity Affordable grant as an opportunity to implement ideas and advance broader policy goals. In terms of implementation, Colorado will use MOA funds to launch an innovative test program to encourage select pilot institutions to a) enroll adult-ready students to take a positive step toward completion, and b) enroll underserved populations to take steps toward closing the achievement gap in the state. Colorado also will work on the broader goal of advancing state-level funding changes in the state, to specifically include productivity measures of performance as a component of institutional allocations. Student flow models and policy audits will be used as strategic and informational tools to support these efforts.

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## INDIANA

The Making Opportunity Affordable learning year will focus on the continued implementation of Indiana's "Strategic Initiatives for Higher Education." This recently adopted plan from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education includes substantial components that are focused on student success, efficiency and operational effectiveness. With support from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the governor's office, key legislative leaders and others, the MOA learning year will emphasize two efforts that will help make this plan a reality:

1. The implementation, expansion and analysis of a new funding formula for public higher education that includes financial incentives for degree completion, course completion, time to degree and other outcomes measures.
2. A continuing dialogue with and engagement of postsecondary faculty and leadership to identify challenges within their institutions that could inhibit increased success and efficiency, and to identify and/or develop strategies for overcoming those challenges.

Indiana's broad-based leadership team has already unified around a core set of principles; thus, the coming year is an opportunity to begin the implementation of an aggressive shift in higher education policy. The MOA learning year will help identify key components of that work – both in state policy and in postsecondary operations – that are needed to make this shift successful for the long-term.

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# STATE ACTIONS

## MARYLAND

Maryland will focus on strengthening and expanding the postsecondary pipeline between two-year and four-year institutions in areas of workforce shortage, including teaching, nursing, and engineering. Specific emphasis will be placed on the analysis of policies, programs, and practices that extend access and promote seamless transfer as students move from community colleges into four-year colleges and universities. Project initiatives will include a comprehensive needs assessment involving critical stakeholder groups, data collection and analysis, policy audits at the institutional and state levels, and the identification of challenges, opportunities, and strategic directions for the state.

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## MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi will use the MOA learning year to enhance and leverage existing efforts to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of academic programs by advancing a system-wide redesign of developmental education courses. Building upon its Course Redesign Initiative with the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT), Mississippi will engage in a multifaceted effort designed to align resources to improve college graduation rates. This effort will include building institutional and public support as well as the identification of effective incentives to improve student learning using information technology.

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## MONTANA

Montana's focus during the learning year will be to identify obstacles and develop plans that will allow Montana to increase enrollments in two-year education as a portal to higher-wage jobs and four-year degrees. Specifically, the state will be looking at strategies that rely on collaborative approaches among educational institutions and technological solutions to create a cohesive and coordinated approach to increasing early college access for high school students and growing opportunities for non-traditional students. Currently, Montana's enrollment rates for both categories of students are last in the West and its percentage of college students enrolled in two-year colleges (21 percent) is less than half of the national average.

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## OHIO

The Making Opportunity Affordable grant will allow the University System of Ohio to better communicate and advance three key strategies that will make public higher education more productive and efficient.

1. The creation of a new funding formula for public higher education that targets state dollars on successful academic outcomes, such as course and degree completions;
2. The formation of a statewide Efficiency Council that will identify and disseminate best practices across the system in a high-profile, public forum; and
3. The submission of accountability reports from all public higher education institutions, which marks the first time in Ohio's history that institutions have systematically aligned their own goals with the state's goals.

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## TENNESSEE

The productivity agenda of Making Opportunity Affordable provides a framework and focus for development of the 2010-2015 master plan for Tennessee higher education. Tennessee will focus its efforts on making sure students' and taxpayers' dollars are used not just to get students into colleges and universities, but to get them out with degrees that will make them and their state more competitive in the global economy. The planning grant year will be focused on ensuring that the state's higher education funding formulas, performance incentives, and other key policies reflect that priority, and that the 2010-2015 master plan includes specific, achievable goals for the number of Tennesseans earning college degrees.

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## TEXAS

Texas has embarked on a multifaceted statewide initiative to improve college completion rates and reduce the cost to degree. Improved use of the state's community colleges and the creation of 2+2 programs will be essential components of this initiative. With the MOA planning funds over the next year, Texas will: 1) seek legislative approval for changes in higher education funding methodology to focus on outcomes/outputs rather than inputs and 2) develop a statewide degree program in mechanical engineering that will facilitate efficient transfer of credits among community colleges and four-year institutions. Through the development of the mechanical engineering degree program, Texas will refine the process for developing degree programs in other areas of study and expanding this process to other fields of study over the next four years.

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# STATE ACTIONS

## WISCONSIN

During the MOA learning year, Wisconsin will focus on strategies to enhance preparation and access, and facilitate transitions/transfers and completion, with particular emphasis on improving the likelihood of success in higher education for returning adults, veterans, and underserved students. In addition, a comprehensive public engagement strategy will help build public will for change and action. The effort will integrate the many initiatives underway across the state that focus on improving the cost effectiveness, quality, and productivity of Wisconsin's postsecondary education systems and institutions.

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