

Highlights of Our Progress

Higher education is developing Common Core/Smarter Balanced plans. State higher education leads are finalizing plans to engage faculty and administrators in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced assessments. Leads shared their work with each other at a Smarter Balanced meeting in August, and states will begin implementing their plans this fall.

Consortium outlines process for higher education input on key assessment design decisions. In consultation with the state K-12 and higher education leads, Smarter Balanced has outlined the key decisions, such as achievement levels on the 11th grade summative assessment, on which K-12 and higher education must reach agreement. When states vote on these topics, the voting member must affirm that K-12 and higher education leaders are in accord on the state's position.

Item writing /review, research, and test design continue this summer and fall. Work is progressing on test design and development along several fronts. CTB/McGraw-Hill is working with K-12 teachers from Governing States to write and review items and tasks for content, bias, and sensitivity. Higher education faculty will have the opportunity to review assessment mock-ups in spring 2013. Students are participating in cognitive labs that will study how students approach and interact with different types of computer-administered items. Finally, a bank of 60 sample items will be released in mid-September that provides exemplars from each grade level of the various item types that will be used in the summative assessment.

Senior higher education leaders help states plan for the Common Core and Smarter Balanced. Smarter Balanced regional senior advisors assist states in crafting and implementing plans to engage college faculty and administrators in understanding the Common Core, responding to the standards' implications for higher education, and contributing to the development of the Smarter Balanced Assessment system. The regional advisors are:

- **Northeast:** Richard Pattenau, former chancellor of the University of Maine System;
- **Southeast:** Dianne Bazell, former senior leader at the Kentucky and Illinois higher education coordinating boards;
- **Midwest:** Robert Stein, former Missouri commissioner of higher education;
- **Mountain West:** Cheryl Blanco, former vice president of the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (currently part-time vice president at the Southern Regional Education Board);
- **Far West:** Albert Karnig, former president of California State University, San Bernardino.

Opportunities for Involvement

Collaboration Conference scheduled for September. From September 11-14, Smarter Balanced will hold its second Collaboration Conference in St. Louis to discuss design and implementation issues and facilitate coordination on key projects. State K-12 leads, Higher Education Leads, and K-12 education chiefs will meet to discuss key decisions facing the Consortium.

Higher education faculty will help draft descriptors of achievement levels for the summative assessment. Higher education faculty will take the lead on creating an operational definition of college readiness and achievement level descriptors for the Grade 11 summative assessment that articulate the mastery of knowledge and skills described in the Common Core State Standards that are required for success in credit-bearing, transferable, entry-level courses. Higher education faculty, K-12 teachers, and other content experts will collaborate on these key descriptions and definitions at a workshop scheduled for October 1-5 in Las Vegas. All faculty will have the opportunity to comment on the draft college readiness definition and achievement level descriptors (ALDs) when they are circulated for comment in mid-November. In addition, regional leadership meetings will be held for K-12 chief state school officers, higher education executive officers, and governors' education policy aides to discuss the draft ALDs.

Common Core, Smarter Balanced, and the Completion Agenda

A new report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce examines the impact the economic recession, finding that Americans with a high school diploma or less bore the brunt of job losses during the downturn. *The College Advantage: Weathering the Economic Storm* is available at <http://cew.georgetown.edu/collegeadvantage/>.