



SHEEO

State Higher Education
Executive Officers Association

Quarterly Policy Review Spring 2024

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The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) serves the executives of statewide governing, policy, and coordinating boards of postsecondary education and their staffs. Founded in 1954, SHEEO is celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2024. SHEEO promotes an environment that values higher education and its role in ensuring the equitable education of all Americans, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic factors. Together with its members, SHEEO aims to achieve this vision by equipping state higher education executive officers and their staffs with the tools to effectively advance the value of higher education, promoting public policies and academic practices that enable all Americans to achieve success in the 21st century, and serving as an advocate for state higher education leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

As state legislative sessions adjourn *sine die* for 2024, lawmakers have passed bills this spring to address a wide range of issues and challenges in higher education. SHEEO agencies, meanwhile, have unveiled a host of initiatives designed to address state and student needs. While the major national issue in higher education remains the delayed rollout of the FAFSA, other topics, such as economic and workforce development, student mental health, and transparency have received attention from policymakers and state higher education officials. This quarterly report provides a review of state- and system-level activity around the country during Spring 2024. These updates are drawn from SHEEO agency press releases, news articles, and other sources.

If you would like to include an item in a future report, please send it to Tom Harnisch, vice president for government relations, at tharnisch@sheeo.org.

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

States continue to prioritize economic and workforce development through increased funding and student financial support, expansion of internship and training programs, integration of artificial learning, and innovative partnerships with businesses and community organizations to develop impactful student pathways from K-12 into the workforce. Many SHEEO agencies announced unique collaborations and funding opportunities this past quarter that support state economic development. SHEEOs are focused on developing student skills and experiences in growing industry sectors and meeting the future needs of their workforce.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE), the governing body of the **North Dakota** University System, [reviewed findings](#) from nine study groups commissioned to provide recommendations at the Envision 2035 summit on the future and evolving needs of higher education in North Dakota. The findings emphasized a need to prioritize and expand the use of artificial intelligence and digitization. At a recent [event](#), Chancellor Mark Hagerott discussed how artificial intelligence would affect all sectors of society and the need for North Dakota to invest in its expansion to ensure its competitiveness.

The State University of **New York** [announced](#) its second year of the Chancellor's Summer Research Excellence Fund which provides undergraduate students with paid internships. This year, 22 of the internship experiences will be focused on increasing the diversity, equity, and inclusion of artificial intelligence research and development.

The State Council of Higher Education for **Virginia** [announced](#) its recent awarding of the 2024 Fund for Excellence and Innovation grant program where three universities each received \$75,000 to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into the classroom and create pathways from secondary to postsecondary education that include AI curriculum. Similarly, The North Dakota University System [awarded](#) 15 scholarships to university faculty to engage in professional development on artificial intelligence through the Dakota Digital Academy. The scholarships were awarded to faculty across various academic disciplines and will help faculty learn new practices to better support students in their classrooms.

INTERNSHIPS AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

The **Pennsylvania** State System of Higher Education has [launched](#) a work-based learning initiative in collaboration with employers to provide students with hands-on experience and job opportunities aligned with their fields of study. This partnership aims to enhance students' career readiness and foster connections between academia and industry, offering valuable practical skills and insights for future employment.

The State Council of Higher Education for **Virginia** [awarded](#) \$1.2 million to 12 institutions through its [Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership \(V-TOP\)](#) to help remove barriers to internships and work-based learning opportunities. The grants can be used by the universities to fund internship stipends, transportation assistance, purchase of professional attire or uniforms, housing costs or other necessary expenses. Virginia also [awarded](#) \$1.15 million to 12 institutions to improve institutional data collection on student participation in internship and work-based learning to help identify trends.

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) [launched](#) the Veterans Enrollment and Support Internship Program to support student veterans with paid internships at 23 SUNY institutions. SUNY also [announced](#) the expansion of the Chancellor's Summer Research Excellence Fund. The program will provide 170 students from across six campuses with paid internship opportunities. The expansion will focus on providing these opportunities to students who may face challenges securing research experiences.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The University of **Maine** System has played a pivotal role in [launching](#) the Maine Defense Industry Alliance (MDIA) alongside the University of Maine, industry, and government partners. MDIA aims to bolster Maine's defense sector by fostering collaboration between academia, defense companies, and policymakers to advance innovation, research, and workforce development. This alliance signifies a strategic effort to capitalize on Maine's potential as a hub for defense-related activities, enhancing the state's economy.

The **Minnesota** Office of Higher Education [announced](#) the opening of the 2024 Dual Training Grant [application](#), offering funding to employers in various industries such as advanced manufacturing, agriculture, health care services, information technology, child care, transportation, and the legal cannabis industry. These grants support the related instruction component of dual-training programs, enabling employees to earn credentials while working. With approximately \$5 million available this year, employers can apply for up to \$15,000 for dual trainee support costs like transportation, tutoring, and translation, reflecting an ongoing effort to meet evolving workforce needs and promote skill development across Minnesota.

Senators Susan Collins and Angus King have successfully secured federal funding that will accelerate economic and community development initiatives led by the University of **Maine** System (UMS) through Congressionally Directed Spending awards. The [initial round](#) of funding will support the modernization of UMS infrastructure at its public institutions and the [second round](#) of funding will strengthen the state's workforce in high-demand areas such as nursing. The projects funded will drive economic growth and address community needs across Maine.

Governor Kathy Hochul in **New York** announced a \$32 million investment to expand the Direct Support Professional micro-credential program in collaboration with the State University of New York (SUNY) and the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. This funding aims to grow the Direct Support Professional workforce in New York, supporting individuals with developmental disabilities. SUNY plans to expand the program across existing campuses and introduce it to additional campuses to support up to 6,000 students by 2030. The expansion builds on previous investments, including a \$5 million award in February 2023 and an additional \$20 million earlier this year.

The Healey-Driscoll Administration in **Massachusetts** [announced](#) \$1.5 million in grants through the Training Resources and Internships Network program to support new community college workforce training programs across the state. Thirteen community colleges will receive funding to offer free career training to over 400 adult learners in fields such as education, health care, cyber security, and manufacturing.

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) Chancellor John B. King, Jr. [announced](#) the opening of applications for the [SUNY/Office of Mental Health Scholarship Program](#), established by Governor Hochul with a \$4 million federal investment. The program offers scholarships, paid internships, fee waivers for graduate school applicants, and more to support students in mental health degree programs, aiming to attract, retain, and graduate diverse professionals in the mental health field to improve the quality of mental health care for all New York State residents. Additionally, SUNY is investing nearly \$10 million annually to expand mental health services for students and address disparities in mental health care.

The **Oklahoma** State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) [awarded](#) the [Regents Business Partnership Excellence Awards](#) to 27 partnerships between higher education, businesses, and the community. These partnerships aim to foster economic development, enhance educational opportunities, and address workforce needs across various industries in Oklahoma. Institutions provide a \$500 tuition waiver to employees of the business or organization in the partnership and OSRHE grants a \$500 match to the waiver. Funding recipients include a wide range of initiatives from health care to aerospace, reflecting the diverse impact of these collaborative efforts on the state's economy and education system.

The **Oregon** Higher Education Coordinating Commission has [released](#) its inaugural [Semiconductor Workforce and Talent Assessment](#), providing insights into the semiconductor industry's landscape and workforce requirements. With Oregon's semiconductor industry anticipating significant growth from a \$40 billion capital investment, the assessment recommends enhancing educational pathways and fostering diversity in the workforce to meet the industry's talent demands. Collaboration between employers, educators, and community partners is highlighted as essential for adapting education and training programs to industry needs and supporting student success, with strategies including early awareness of industry opportunities, increased STEM education, and greater support for historically underserved communities.

In **New York**, Gov. Kathy Hochul [announced](#) the expansion of the state's financial aid program, Tuition Assistance Program, to now cover non-degree programs in high-demand fields beginning in Spring 2024. For the first time, non-degree-seeking students in 283 programs across 32 campuses will be eligible for state financial aid.

TEACHER APPRENTICESHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

The **Idaho** State Board of Education's [K-12 Registered Teacher Apprenticeship](#) program [gained approval](#) from the Idaho Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Labor, with two local education agencies already signed on to participate. The program offers an "earn and learn" pathway for individuals to become certified teachers, particularly benefiting those with classroom experience such as paraprofessionals. This initiative will address Idaho's shortage of certified teachers, especially in rural areas, by providing full-time paid positions with on-the-job training supervised by experienced teachers, thus enabling candidates to earn higher wages while obtaining certification.

The University of **North Carolina** System [announced](#) that the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission selected Appalachian State University and East Carolina University as its new partner institutions for its Teaching Fellows [program](#) starting in 2024-25. These institutions will offer initial teacher licensure programs in STEM education, Exceptional Children education, and elementary education, joining the existing eight partner colleges and universities. The expansion follows a law passed by the General Assembly last year, which intended to increase the program's reach and impact, recognizing the crucial role of public schools and the teaching profession in North Carolina.

FOCUS ON IMPROVING LITERACY TRAINING

The **Kansas** Board of Regents has [adopted](#) a blueprint to enhance student literacy skills across Kansas. This [comprehensive plan](#) will focus on improving reading proficiency among K-12 students by addressing various aspects of literacy education, including teacher training, curriculum development, and community engagement.

STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND RESEARCH

The Universities of **Wisconsin** (UW) [hosted](#) the 20th annual [Research in the Rotunda](#) event with over 150 undergraduate student researchers presenting their findings to state legislators, business leaders, and other supporters at the State Capitol. UW President Jay Rothman highlighted the significance of undergraduate research in enhancing student learning, informing teaching practices, and improving job opportunities for graduates. The event featured diverse research topics such as financial literacy education, artificial intelligence, the impact of COVID-19 on college student stress, and smart farming, demonstrating the breadth of undergraduate research across the UW system.

The **West Virginia** Higher Education Policy Commission **awarded** \$339,880 in state funding to eight colleges and universities to support undergraduate research experiences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These grants, administered by the **Science, Technology & Research (STaR)** division, aim to enhance undergraduate education by providing students with opportunities to engage in hands-on research activities alongside faculty mentors.

The University of **Vermont** **awarded** a teenage entrepreneur a full-tuition scholarship after winning the inaugural **Vermont Pitch Challenge**, a university pitch competition for high school entrepreneurs. The competition is an opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs to present their business ideas to a panel of judges. The winner impressed the judges with their innovative business concept raising awareness about mental health issues affecting kids and teens and providing support through action sports.

The **Pennsylvania** State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) **announced** the 2024 **PASSHE Startup Challenge** winner. The competition promotes entrepreneurship and innovation among students attending any PASSHE institution and awards the top 3 finalists with cash prizes of up to \$10,000 for their innovative business ideas.

SCHOOL-TO-WORK PATHWAYS

The **Washington** Student Achievement Council **received** \$1 million in new funding from the National Center for Education Research to expand a **research project** in partnership with MDRC and supported by data from the Washington Education Research & Data Center. The project examines students' pathways after high school, including traditional college, non-degree, and workforce, to identify which trajectories lead to better workforce outcomes. The project will engage with practitioners and learners to better understand critical pivot points in these pathways and provide evidence-based insights to help students and families make informed decisions about their futures.

The **Indiana** Commission for Higher Education (CHE) **announced** the 2024 application cycle for its **Career Coaching Grant**, established by the Indiana General Assembly with a \$25 million budget, to provide students with comprehensive career guidance and support. Eligible recipients include school corporations, public schools, state-accredited nonpublic schools, approved intermediaries, and career coaching providers.

CHE also awarded \$5 million to 25 approved intermediaries through the **Intermediary Capacity Building Grant** to enhance their capacity to facilitate connections between students, schools, employers, and postsecondary institutions. Recipients must utilize the funds to broaden access to various programs, including Career Scholarship Accounts, Career Discovery Meetings, and Career Coaching and Navigation.

STATE ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The **Mississippi** Institutions of Higher Learning's University Research Center **released** a new **report** highlighting the top 20 fastest-growing and highest-paying jobs in Mississippi, 12 of which are in the health care sector. With median annual salaries often double the state average, fields like nurse practitioner, physical therapy assistant, and medical and health service manager were among the top five. The report underscores the crucial role of Mississippi's universities in providing the necessary education and training for students to pursue these career paths and contribute meaningfully to the state's workforce.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY & BASIC NEEDS

Basic needs insecurity among college students is a pressing issue for higher education and state leaders. Basic needs such as food, housing, childcare services, internet access, transportation, technology, physical safety, and mental health services not only constitute a significant portion of college expenses but also often pose major obstacles to students' success in the classroom, especially for underserved populations. As discussions about college affordability and student well-being increasingly emphasize basic needs, several state agencies are strategically implementing initiatives and programs to address this broad spectrum of student needs.

SUPPORT FOR INSTITUTIONS ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS

The **Minnesota** Office of Higher Education has [awarded](#) more than \$900,000 in Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students grants to 10 tribal and private nonprofit institutions. This funding, partly intended to replace the expiring Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, supports institutions providing campus-run basic needs services to students in financial emergencies. Additionally, a further \$6 million has been committed over the next two years to enhance emergency grant programs at the University of Minnesota system and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

In **New Mexico**, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's Food Initiative is helping to address food and housing insecurity in higher education through institution grants and a statewide consortium. The New Mexico Higher Education Department [provided](#) \$1 million in grants to eight colleges and universities for innovative projects like fresh produce cultivation and collaborations with culinary arts programs or local industries to enhance food security among students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, the New Mexico Basic Needs Consortium has [joined](#) the "White House's Challenge to End Hunger and Build Healthy Communities," a national initiative to end hunger by 2030. The Basic Needs Consortium focuses on enhancing food security and improving retention among minoritized students in public and tribal colleges statewide.

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) has rolled out initiatives to support food security and housing security across its campuses. Aligning with Gov. Kathy Hochul's directive, SUNY [announced](#) a partnership with the Benefits Data Trust that aims to connect eligible students across five SUNY community colleges with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other public benefits to help students succeed academically. SUNY has also [designated](#) homeless liaisons at every campus to help students overcome housing challenges.

EXAMINE THE STATE CONTEXT OF BASIC NEEDS

In **Michigan**, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential [established](#) a task force of local, regional, and state leaders to explore the basic needs insecurities affecting student success and make recommendations for policy change. The **Tennessee** Higher Education Commission [published](#) a comprehensive report on food insecurity. The report offers an overview of the topic, presents survey results on interventions and services, and provides recommendations for statewide policy, practice, and research.

BREAKING THE STIGMA OF BASIC NEEDS SERVICES

In **Pennsylvania**, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) [launched](#) the "You Good?" campaign to reduce the stigma associated with seeking support services. Complementing the PA MASLOW campaign, a program centered on addressing collegiate basic needs hierarchy, the "You Good?" initiative aims to improve students' willingness to access basic needs resources. The PDE developed customizable, [anti-stigma posters](#) for institutions to promote access to transportation, food, mental health, financial support, physical health, parent-learner, and housing resources.

VALUE, ROI, & TRANSPARENCY

Reports, dashboards, and other data are critical for highlighting the value proposition of higher education and challenging the notion that college lacks financial value. State postsecondary systems increasingly use clear, accessible data to demonstrate higher education's impact on individual success, the economy, and society. These transparent approaches not only support strategic decision-making but also strengthen public trust in educational investments.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

In **Hawai'i**, the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization (UHERO) report [revealed](#) a strong economic return on investment for students earning degrees and certificates from the 10 campuses of the University of Hawai'i System. The UHERO report [indicated](#) that despite a national rise in tuition over the past two decades, the University of Hawai'i System has become more affordable in the last 10 years, and college completion among Pell Grant recipients significantly enhances economic mobility for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds – findings [emphasized](#) by President Lassner in a report to the Board of Regents.

The **Utah** System of Higher Education [released](#) a report from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah indicating that higher education significantly increases earnings and employment opportunities, and improves health outcomes in Utah. The [report](#) also underscored the broad societal benefits, such as higher civic engagement and reduced public assistance dependency.

TRANSPARENCY THROUGH DASHBOARDS AND RESEARCH

In **Iowa**, the Governor recently signed legislation requiring the Board of Regents to annually report a series of financial-specific success metrics of graduates. The Board of Regents has developed a [dashboard](#) that allows users to search for post-graduation outcomes including percent of graduates with federal loan debt, student-debt spending, and median income by major.

In **Maryland**, the Maryland Higher Education Commission [announced](#) a collection of 16 new interactive [dashboards](#) aimed at improving transparency and facilitating informed decision-making across Maryland's higher education system. These publicly available dashboards provide detailed data and insights into student enrollment, financial aid, graduation rates, workforce outcomes, and private career schools, among other areas.

In **Washington**, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) [announced](#) the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) Dashboard and an accompanying Research Digest series. The [SAP Dashboard](#) presents a comprehensive snapshot of data across various indicators in postsecondary education, providing insights on affordability, enrollment, student support, and completion. The WASC [Research Digests](#) highlight key education insights from the dashboards into concise and informal summaries.

The **South Carolina** Commission on Higher Education [launched](#) the South Carolina Transfer Outcomes Dashboard to enhance transparency in the transfer process among state postsecondary institutions. This [dashboard](#) tracks transfer trends and compares the success of transfer and non-transfer students across South Carolina, supporting data-driven decisions by disaggregating data – by county, program, and other demographic characteristics – to enhance transfer pathways.

STUDENT SUCCESS & COLLEGE COMPLETION

As states and systems are looking to increase completion rates and make progress toward their educational attainment goals, they are taking steps to implement initiatives that can advance student success. Efforts across the country aim to reach a variety of targeted student populations, primarily adult learners and marginalized student groups, to address financial barriers and use data to improve pathways to degree or credential completion.

CREDITS FOR PRIOR LEARNING

In March, the **Indiana** Commission for Higher Education [announced](#) the launch of its statewide credit for prior learning (CPL) model policy guidance. Methods for assessing and awarding college credit for college-level knowledge, skills, and competencies gained outside of the traditional college classroom setting vary by institution. This statewide guidance aims to increase consistency in standards, values, and practices across all of Indiana's institutions of higher education.

In April, the University of **North Carolina** (UNC) System launched its [UNC System Military Equivalency System](#) to provide a user-friendly database that allows for course comparison across the system's universities. Rather than having to contact individual universities for military credit transfer options, learners in the military will be able to use this tool to match courses across all 16 campuses and determine their most cost-effective pathway to degree completion.

The **Oklahoma** State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (CareerTech) [signed](#) an agreement to allow public two-year colleges to grant credit for prior learning in practical nursing programs at technology centers statewide. This partnership aims to address the nursing shortage by streamlining pathways for nursing students and increasing the health care workforce in Oklahoma. The agreement allows for up to 18 college credit hours to be awarded to CareerTech students who pass the licensure exam at participating institutions, facilitating an easier transition into associate degree nursing programs.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PARENTS

After **California** General Assembly Bill 2881 passed in 2022, the California State University (CSU) system implemented a mechanism in the online course registration system, allowing students to self-certify as a student parent and receive priority registration status. Now, CSU is starting to use data from these records to [target student parents](#) with re-enrollment pathways, communicate on-campus resources and events, and develop new programs and services to meet the unique needs of this student population.

The **Illinois** Board of Higher Education (IBHE) recently [released](#) its 2023 Student Parent Data Collection Act Report. In accordance with the 2021 Student Parent Data Collection Act (110 ILCS 149), IBHE worked with the state's 12 public universities to complete the second iteration of this annual report, using systematic and statewide reporting to describe key findings including demographics of student parents, institutional enrollment and enrollment status, accessibility to university-affiliated childcare, and academic outcomes.

STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

Recently, the **Colorado** Commission on Higher Education approved 26 Open Education Resource (OER) project proposals for the sixth year of the [Colorado OER Grant Program](#) cycle. Selected projects at public institutions were awarded in five tiers, ranging from zero textbook degree development (or “Z-degrees”) to collaborative, small group, incentive, and individual awards. More than 60% of the \$1 million in funding was awarded to “Z-degree” development and collaborative projects.

In 2021, the University System of **Georgia** (USG) began a partnership with the National Institute for Student Success (NISS) to improve student enrollment, retention, and completion and close student achievement gaps. Recently, the USG Chancellor [announced](#) that data from the seven USG universities that have been working with NISS saw an average one-year retention rate increase of 6.7 percentage points from fall 2022 to fall 2023. USG is now working to engage more of the system’s institutions in this work with NISS as part of an ongoing system-wide effort to promote degree completion.

This spring, the **Michigan** Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) [announced](#) the Student Success grant initiative, a \$45 million grant program implemented to help achieve the state’s [Sixty by 30](#) goal. This initiative consists of five types of competitive grants, ranging from quick-start assessment and planning-based grants to student success, barrier removal, and community reconnection action grants. In March, MiLEAP announced that Michigan’s public and tribal colleges and universities can receive up to \$1 million from [College Success Grants](#), housed under the state’s Student Success grant initiative. College Success Grants have three subcategories differing in award amounts and grant length based on the project’s aim to strengthen, implement, and expand, or scale evidence-based student success strategies to increase degree and credential attainment.

BUDGET & PUBLIC POLICY

State support for higher education is closely tied to state economies and revenue collections. Recent budget proposals and legislation for fiscal year 2025 have reflected efforts to address college affordability and in some cases have included measures to increase long-term sustainability of funding to higher education through economically challenging times. SHEEO will provide more information on the outcomes of the 2024 legislative sessions in the months ahead.

STATE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL 2025

In April, the **Alabama** House [passed](#) HB 145, approving a \$9.35 billion budget for the state's Education Trust Fund (ETF). The ETF supports K-12, higher education, and other state agencies. If signed into law, Alabama colleges and universities and the Alabama Community College System would see 7.1% and 6.5% increases, respectively, in fiscal year 2025.

After **Colorado** lawmakers [proposed](#) a 10% boost in funding to higher education including \$2.4 million to the state's three smallest rural universities in April, Gov. Jared Polis signed [House Bill 24-1430](#). The final bill includes an increase of \$140 million to higher education to help resident student tuition rate growth stay below the rate of inflation in fiscal year 2025, resulting in a maximum increase cap of 3%.

In March, **New Mexico** Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham [signed](#) Senate Bill 159, creating the Higher Education Trust Fund. This fund, supported by the Tax Stabilization Reserve fund, will ensure state financial aid for programs including the Opportunity and Lottery Scholarship is available even when there is less state funding available overall. The initial \$959 million investment will help generate interest revenue for the future. Additionally, Gov. Lujan Grisham [approved \\$1.3 billion](#) to support higher education in fiscal year 2025. This includes \$162 million for the Opportunity Scholarship and a 4% increase in operational funding to the state's 25 public colleges and universities.

STATE FUNDING FORMULA

In **Illinois**, lawmakers created the Illinois Commission on Equitable Public University Funding, and tasked this Commission with developing a funding formula that centers adequacy, equity, and sustainability. In March, the Commission [submitted its formula recommendations](#) to the Illinois General Assembly, which involves funding each institution based on characteristics such as their individual student body makeup, mission and programs, and available resources to center equity and target adequacy. This funding approach would require the state to increase funding to universities by an estimated \$1.4 billion over the next 15 years or more.

TUITION AND FEES

In April, the **South Dakota** Board of Regents (BOR) received \$5.7 million in the 2024 Legislative Session to freeze tuition for resident and nonresident students attending one of the state's six public universities in the 2025 academic year. This will mark the fifth consecutive year of the BOR keeping tuition rates flat.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, FREE SPEECH, & PUBLIC PURPOSES

Civic learning and democracy engagement (CLDE) is a growing area of academic interest for states because of CLDE's potential to contribute to whole student development and skills development across disciplines, whether in the traditional categories of humanities, professional disciplines, or STEM. Burgeoning interest is evidenced by a growing movement, the CLDE Multi-State Collaborative (MSC), a two-year-old coalition of states that agree on 1) public higher education's responsibility to prepare students to participate in civic and democratic life; 2) civic education's inclusion in the learning experience of all the two- and four-year institutions in statewide systems, and 3) the value of a learning community of states and systems leads for shared development, while honoring the uniqueness and capacity within each state to do so.

Member states represent a breadth of regions, governance models, political landscapes, capacity, and resources. Research affirms that college students' engagement and education around civic issues are critical to postsecondary success. The positive impacts of civic engagement are also a reflection of the value proposition of higher education, which remains a priority issue for SHEEOs.

FREE SPEECH AND DEBATE

Organized by the **Arizona** Board of Regents, the [Regents' Cup](#) is a speech and debate competition for student orators from Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona. The event focuses on Oxford debate and storytelling, emphasizing the importance of civil discourse and free speech in a democratic society. This year's theme for the Cup was democracy, justice, and the rule of law. Judges included a diverse group of elected officials, business and community leaders, journalists, and educators. Arizona State University [took home](#) the coveted Regents' Cup. First place winners earned a \$15,000 one-time scholarship to finance their education, second place earned \$12,000 and third place earned \$5,000. Each remaining student competitor was awarded a \$500 one-time scholarship. Students also earned course credit at their university.

The **Wisconsin** Institute for Citizenship and Civil Dialogue [announced](#) a new grant program for faculty, staff, and students at the Universities of Wisconsin to promote democracy and civil dialogue. This program will distribute \$90,000 in grants for projects focused on research, events, assessment, and professional development.

The University System of **Georgia** [organized](#) its first Regent Cup Debate Series in March 2024. This inaugural event featured students from six USG institutions, including prominent universities such as Georgia Tech University and the University of Georgia. The competition highlighted the importance of civil discourse, with participants engaging in debates on various topics, including global economic issues and the impacts of technology on society. The debates utilized the International Public Debate Association structure, allowing students to showcase their ability to think on their feet and develop strong argumentation and refutation skills. [Valdosta State University](#) won the team debate competition, while the University of Georgia secured the individual debate champion title.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DISCOURSE

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) [announced](#) the inaugural class for the Civic Education and Engagement and Civil Discourse Fellowship. The 10 fellows will advance SUNY's dedication to civic education and engagement, including the development of a learning convening in fall 2024. Research suggests that civic engagement by college students improves graduation and retention rates, career-related skills, and social responsibility.

DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) [announced](#) the launch of the SUNY Black Leadership Institute (BLI), modeled after the nationally recognized Hispanic Leadership Institute (HLI), to support, retain, and foster the success of emerging and current leaders. Faculty and administrative professionals serving in mid- to senior-level roles will be guided through leadership assessments, interactive online and in-person workshops, and professional mentoring sessions designed to advance leadership skills. BLI funding was enacted in the 2023 New York State Budget.

HEALTH EQUITY

The University of **Hawai'i** was [awarded](#) a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health to address Indigenous health disparities and advance health equity in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities. The five-year initiative emphasizes the implementation of innovative and culturally derived frameworks to prevent and improve disparities in chronic diseases, such as obesity, hypertension, and diabetes.

PARENTAL LEAVE

The Universities of **Wisconsin** and the University of Wisconsin-Madison [announced](#) new policies that offer employees six weeks of paid time off following the birth or adoption of a child. Full-time employees who have worked for the universities for at least six consecutive months would be eligible to receive the benefit effective July 1. Part-time employees will receive a prorated amount of paid parental leave based on the number of hours worked. This change comes after UW-Madison faculty and staff lobbied administrators to implement a paid parental leave policy.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) [announced](#) the phase-out of single-use plastics to demonstrate its commitment to environmental progress. The SUNY system will work with the [SustainChain public service](#) to create a plastic-free solutions hub with access to resources to meet this new campus requirement. This policy comes after the SUNY Board of Trustees passed a resolution to form the Task Force on the Elimination of Single-Use Plastics at SUNY. It also aligns with the groundbreaking legislation signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul that encourages SUNY and the City University of New York to phase out single-use plastics.

COLLEGE ACCESS, PREPARATION, & ENROLLMENT

ADMISSIONS REDESIGN GRANT

Lumina Foundation has [awarded](#) more than \$3 million to state higher education offices and systems through its Great Admissions Redesign to transform admissions processes and improve accessibility for all students, especially underrepresented populations. Implementation and planning grants to the **California** State University System, **Illinois** Board of Higher Education, **Louisiana** Board of Regents, **Kentucky** Council on Postsecondary Education, Northern **Arizona** University, **Texas** Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the **Washington** Student Achievement Council will support efforts to reduce barriers, streamline procedures, and enhance transparency.

ADULT STUDENTS

The **Missouri** Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development, in collaboration with the Education Strategy Group and the Missouri College & Career Attainment Network, has [released](#) an adult learner strategic framework, Sixty for All, to assist the state's 150,000 adult learners with earning credentials preparing them for the Missouri workforce.

The **Kentucky** Council for Postsecondary Education is [collaborating](#) with Ithaka S+R on research and consulting to identify challenges and re-enrollment opportunities for adult learners who have stopped out. With funding from Lumina Foundation and The Kresge Foundation, partnership goals include identifying and assessing data on administrative holds and past due balances, and exploring policies and practices that support adult learners with some credit but no credentials.

DIRECT/GUARANTEED ADMISSIONS

The Universities of **Wisconsin** has [announced](#) The Wisconsin Guarantee – a new policy providing automatic admissions for top-performing students to the state's 13 public institutions. With traditional applications and Direct Admit Wisconsin, which offers proactive college admissions to Wisconsin High School students, The Wisconsin Guarantee is one of three pathways for prospective students.

The **Minnesota** Office of Higher Education [released](#) a new [report](#) detailing significant application increases through the Minnesota Direct Admissions programs. Results include higher in-state enrollment and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filing rates for in-state high school graduates. Currently, 119 high schools and 55 institutions participate, with plans to recruit more.

FAFSA COMPLETION

The **Arizona** Board of Regents [partnered](#) with the Arizona Cactus League to incentivize FAFSA completion among high school seniors statewide. Students completing the FAFSA received four free tickets to spring training (Cactus League) Major League Baseball games.

The **Indiana** Commission for Higher Education [announced](#) its statewide FAFSA completion goal, promoting a 5% improvement rate among high school seniors, adult learners, and returning students, with a 60% overall filing rate among high school seniors, to improve access to over \$400 million in state aid and more in federal funding.

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) John B. King, Jr., [announced](#) the expansion of SUNY efforts to support FAFSA completion. Institutions across the 64-campus system will offer additional in-person and virtual sessions for applicants and current students, including on campuses and at area high schools. In addition, as part of the new fiscal year 2024-25 budget, the state of New York will [require](#) high school seniors to complete the FAFSA.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#) her office would mail outreach letters during National FAFSA Week of Action to high school seniors and high school principals to help ensure every student is #FAFSAReady, to help reduce the hundreds of millions of dollars of unclaimed federal aid available to the state's high school students.

The **Michigan** Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential [promoted](#) FAFSA completion with its "[Reach for the Pie](#)" initiative of free pizza for a year for 100 of the state high school seniors filing the form. Completing the FAFSA could unlock awards such as the new Michigan Achievement Scholarship, offering up to \$27,500 for college.

INCARCERATED AND FORMERLY INCARCERATED STUDENTS

The Higher Education and Corrections Council [annual report](#) to the **Utah** System of Higher Education, the Department of Corrections, and the legislature reveals accredited course and associate degree offerings to incarcerated persons. Key findings include enrollment and graduation data, and recommendations to improve student advisement and data systems.

The **Minnesota** Office of Higher Education [announced](#) a request for proposals for ICAP FIS grants (Intervention for College Attendance Program: Formerly Incarcerated Students). Awards to institutions and organizations aim to increase postsecondary access for formerly incarcerated students.

The State University of **New York** Office of Higher Education in Prison (OHEP) [was awarded](#) \$3 million by Ascendium to expand higher education in prison offerings. OHEP supports 14 system campuses that provide degree programs in 23 correctional facilities to 1,000 students annually.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT

The **Indiana** Commission for Higher Education [will begin a study](#) on the factors impacting college enrollment with a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The Commission will partner with Heart+Mind Strategies for a six-month engagement and research with stakeholders statewide from high school students to parents, communities, and employers to better understand enrollment barriers and methods to improve the state's college-going rate.

California State Universities (CSU) [held](#) its 19th annual Super Sunday outreach to local faith-based communities, providing information about college preparation and admissions to prospective students and families. Chancellor Mildred Garcia said during the services at Faithful Central Bible Church in Inglewood, "We want to build lifelong relationships with our Black students and their families and ensure that every Black student attains the life-changing benefits of a CSU degree."