



SHEEO

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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 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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This quarterly report provides a review of state- and system-level activity around the country during Winter 2025. 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

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

California State University (CSU) and the CSU Generative AI Committee are **preparing** students for an AI-powered workforce by offering degree programs related to AI, establishing university partnerships with tech companies, incorporating AI into coursework, reducing AI equity gaps, and creating AI hubs to offer training on the ethical and effective use of AI.

CSU has also **announced** an unprecedented public-private partnership with leading tech companies to create an AI-empowered higher education system. The adoption of AI technologies will allow students and staff across all CSU campuses to access training, learning, and teaching tools. CSU will work with OpenAI – the creator of ChatGPT – to create ChatGPT Edu, a version of the generative AI chatbot with tools, security, and controls for educational institutions.

The **New Jersey** Office of the Secretary of Higher Education **announced** two awards – to NJIT and William Paterson University – as part of the Global Entrepreneurs-in-Residence pilot program. The program is intended to drive innovation and entrepreneurship in the field of generative artificial intelligence. These awards provide a pathway for international entrepreneurs to obtain H-1B visas while they build and scale their startups to advance the state’s innovation goals.

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) has **announced** new requirements for the undergraduate general education curriculum, including updates to the information literacy core competency that reflects the rise of artificial intelligence. Students will develop skills to recognize and ethically use AI, and individual institutions and departments will determine how to incorporate information about AI into their lessons.

The State Council of Higher Education for **Virginia** has **awarded** \$250,000 to a team of researchers to bolster artificial intelligence instruction at community colleges and four-year institutions. This includes AI instruction directed at dual enrollment and community college transfer students, AI-oriented micro-credentials, and AI-focused open educational resources (OER).

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A new report from the **Illinois** Board of Higher Education **outlines** the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to align the state’s education pathways with workforce needs in the region. The report found notable workforce shortages in high-demand sectors such as health care and information technology, as well as disparities in educational attainment and workforce participation across student gender, race, and ethnicity. Recommendations call for improving the accessibility and affordability of high-demand postsecondary training programs, removing barriers to teacher certification, and promoting institution-employer partnerships.

A study commissioned by the **Utah** System of Higher Education **found** that Utah graduates excel in technical skills but need additional support in soft skills such as communication and work ethic. The survey of key industries in the state offers suggestions for expanding work-based learning and aligning higher education and industry to meet workforce demands. Key takeaways from the report included high demand for durable (or “soft”) skills among employers, mixed satisfaction with the technical skills of recent graduates, employers’ desires to retain a presence on campus through industry collaborations, and the value of work-based learning opportunities to improve workforce readiness.

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE

Ten universities with nursing programs in the State University System of **Florida** will **receive** a total of \$6 million in Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) funding to increase the number of nursing graduates in the state. The Florida Board of Governors approved the funding to address the state's nursing shortage. The LINE program is a competitive grant that provides 1:1 matching funds for institutions that partner with health care providers working to meet the local, regional, and statewide demand for nurses.

The **Kentucky** Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) **granted** over \$500,000 in federal, state, and local fiscal recovery funds to 12 colleges and universities to hold summer residential programs on campus focused on health care-related fields. CPE is addressing a shortage of qualified health care professionals, especially in rural areas and in specialties like nursing, medical technology, and allied health.

CPE also **awarded** \$11.8 million in state appropriations from the Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund (HWIF) to support 33 postsecondary health care programs in the state. Eligible programs are those partnered with health care employers who match the dollar amount awarded by the HWIF. Funds are used primarily to support scholarships for students, and scholarship recipients agree to practice in Kentucky in their specialty area for up to two years.

A \$3.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will help institutions in the **Nevada** System of Higher Education **increase** the number of primary care physicians and provide care to underserved communities in the state.

A \$3.7 million investment from the High Needs Nursing Fund is **enhancing** simulation-based education of nursing students at institutions at the State University of **New York** (SUNY). Nursing students at SUNY are eligible to complete up to one-third of their clinical training through high-quality simulation. The investment supports staff training, new simulation and medical equipment, advanced audiovisual tools, and modernization of simulation offerings.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The **Arizona** Board of Regents **announced** an initiative to promote collaboration with military installations in the state and the U.S. Department of Defense. The research collaboration will enhance local and national security while training students in specialized skills for in-demand careers in defense and driving workforce development through industry partnerships.

The **California** State University (CSU) **announced** the launch of the CSU Consortium on Climate Adaptation, with collaboration among faculty experts, staff, and students across the system's 23 campuses. The consortium will prepare students for career opportunities in climate research while encouraging community engagement and partnerships with high schools and other higher education institutions in the state.

The **Louisiana** Board of Regents **received** an \$8 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to expand the state's research and development in STEM through the Louisiana Networks of Excellence for Tomorrow (LA-NEXT) program. LA-NEXT is a four-year partnership with four Louisiana universities to encourage STEM research, support STEM career pathways, and promote workforce development. With a focus on materials and manufacturing, bioscience and biotechnology, and energy and environmental solutions, LA-NEXT is training students to fill the in-demand, high-skill, high-wage jobs of the future in the state.

Seven State University of **New York** (SUNY) campuses have **received** seed funding totaling \$425,000 through the Technology Accelerator Fund (TAF). The grants support research around technologies to treat illnesses, protect the environment, and strengthen the state's electronics industry. TAF enables SUNY faculty to translate their research into marketable technologies and attract potential investors.

The inaugural SUNY Chancellor's Horizon Award for Faculty Research and Scholarship **recognizes** 10 early-career faculty who have achieved recognition or hold promise for field-defining impact through their scholarly or creative works.

The Albany NanoTech Complex has been **designated** as the location of the CHIPS for America Extreme Ultraviolet Accelerator, unlocking \$825 million in federal funding to advance semiconductor manufacturing and R&D in the state and nationally. **New York's** presence in the semiconductor space is due in part to the SUNY research faculty, facilities, and education of the workforce in the industry.

The University of **North Carolina** System has **announced** three universities as new headquarter locations for NCInnovation's applied research support, bringing the total number of innovation hubs in the state to seven. NCInnovation – a nonprofit that supports North Carolina universities in their research – provides grant funding to university researchers working on projects with practical and commercial applications. Directors at NCInnovation connect researchers with industry and businesses to move discoveries toward commercialization.

Rhode Island **announced** \$3.8 million from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act in support of workforce development in ocean technology and 'Blue Economy' jobs. The federal job training program unites private industry, state and local government, higher education, labor unions, and others to stimulate economic growth and connect workers to high-paying jobs. The funding supports ocean robotics, sensors, and other technologies to promote the state's emergent ocean-based economy.

The U.S. Department of Commerce has **awarded** the University of **Vermont's** Tech Hub \$23 million to develop gallium nitride-based semiconductors. The funding enables expanded production of semiconductors to be used in automobiles, cell phones, and advanced manufacturing.

TEACHER PREPARATION AND WORKFORCE

The **California** State University system **created** the Center for Transformational Educator Preparation Programs (CTEPP) to diversify the state's educator workforce through the recruitment, preparation, and retention of teachers of color. CTEPP held a four-year Transformation Lab with 10 campuses designed to better understand systemic challenges in increasing the number of teachers of color and to develop improvement plans across campuses.

The **North Carolina** Teaching Fellows program **awards** up to \$10,000 of merit-based forgivable loans to eligible students who commit to teaching elementary education, special education, or STEM at a public school in the state. Ten institutions are participating in the program designed to recruit, prepare, and support future teachers in North Carolina.

North Carolina has **registered** the state's first statewide Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship Program, Early Years. The program provides apprentices with paid on-the-job learning from a mentor, supplemental education, and credentials that are recognized nationally. Early Years is registered through the State Apprenticeship Agency housed in the North Carolina Community College System.

Four universities in the University of **North Carolina** System have **received** six years of grant funding to support principal preparation programs through the North Carolina Principal Fellows Program. The program is funded through legislative funds and partnerships with local school districts and universities. The four new grantees join four existing grantees committed to preparing high-quality school leaders.

Four institutions in **Ohio** will **receive** awards to offer Ohio's Teacher Bootcamp Program, which brings educators into local businesses to expose them to the skillsets students will need to be career-ready upon graduation. Participating educators are guided through business-led tours and exposed to new industries so they can relay this real-world knowledge to their students. In addition to incentivizing teacher professional development, the Bootcamp Program improves the quality of education in key sectors such as cybersecurity, transportation, health care, and advanced manufacturing.

The Underwood-Smith Teaching Scholars Program **offers** \$10,000-\$40,000 per year to high school seniors interested in pursuing a teaching career in **West Virginia**. The program, which is open to both in-state and out-of-state students, aims to address teacher shortages in math, science, special education, and elementary education. Scholarship recipients agree to teach in one of these fields in the state for at least five years following graduation.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The **Arkansas** Department of Higher Education **awarded** \$26 million in Higher Industry Readiness through Educational Development (HIREd) grants to 14 state universities and community colleges. Funding is intended to provide education and workforce training programs through state and regional partnerships with industry. The grants support Arkansas's workforce and enhance the state's competitiveness in industries such as steel manufacturing and lithium extraction.

Seven institutions in **Colorado** **received** the Career Connected Campus Designation for their practices in preparing students for employment that matches their postsecondary credentials. Institutions receiving the designation prioritize career readiness and professional development through integrating the academic curriculum with work-based learning experience. Recipients include two-year and four-year, public and private, and urban and rural located institutions.

The **Colorado** Talent Pipeline Report – created in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and other state agencies – **highlights** the top jobs in Colorado and reports on areas of growing demand, the status of the labor force, and approaches to balancing talent supply and demand. Policy recommendations stemming from the report include strengthening support for employers to develop talent, increasing career-connected learning opportunities, and optimizing the state's education and training system to reduce barriers to entry.

The **Indiana** Commission for Higher Education **provides** Education Readiness Grants to Indiana high schools with Career and Technical Education programs in high-demand fields, to strengthen school-industry partnerships and improve student access to career opportunities. Current focus areas include smart manufacturing, industrial automation and robotics, biotechnology, cybersecurity, and software development. Grants of up to \$125,000 support CTE pathways coursework, work-based learning experiences, youth apprenticeships, and employer-led training.

Ohio students pursuing degrees and certificates in STEM fields or STEM education are eligible for the state's Choose Ohio First (COF) program. The funding – totaling almost \$32.5 million across five years – is the sixth round of COF grants and **creates** new scholarships at 46 community colleges, private four-year colleges, and public four-year universities. Recipients of the grant are required to participate in work-based learning opportunities such as internships, co-ops, or research in the STEM field.

The State University of **New York** **announced** the SUNY Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Career Development Internship Program. The program is open to up to 50 eligible EOP students who will receive up to \$5,000. Participants in the internship program will connect with state agencies and receive real-world professional experience and skill development in their field of interest. Participants will also have access to personalized mentorship, financial support, and basic needs support.

The **North Carolina** Community College System (NCCCS) is **partnering** with Google to offer free tech training programs to the 58 community colleges in the state. The Google Career Certificates focus on in-demand tech fields and connect students with an employer consortium to locate career opportunities following completion. In addition to stand-alone certificates, NCCCS is offering for-credit courses in select fields.

Students in **North Carolina** with intellectual and developmental disabilities are eligible to enroll in the Access to Achievement program **offered** at 15 community colleges throughout the state. The program provides students with individual plans for growth, learning, and job skills, and assists with employability, academic attainment, and independent living.

NCCCS has **received** grant funding from the Rural Infrastructure Authority to create workforce training programs for nine rural companies through the NCEdge program. NCEdge provides training at NCCCS campuses to support the creation of over 300 jobs in fields such as software development, manufacturing, and health services.

Students in **North Dakota** studying in high-demand fields are eligible for the ND Career Builders Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program. The program **offers** \$125,000 in matching funds to local businesses to recruit employees into high-need fields. Recipients agree to live and work in a high-demand occupation in the state as the loan is repaid over three years. Among the over 100 occupations targeted are nursing, teaching, computer programming, electrical, welding, mechanical engineering, and social work.

The **Oregon** Higher Education Coordinating Commission **announced** \$42 million in Future Ready Oregon Workforce Ready Grants to support 62 workforce and talent development projects. Grants focusing on health care, manufacturing, and technology were awarded to community-based organizations, community colleges, public and private universities, and other education and workforce service providers. The goal of the Future Ready Oregon funding is to address the needs of underserved communities in the state while connecting individuals to good-paying and meaningful careers in high-demand sectors.

Higher education institutions in **Texas** have **received** almost \$13 million from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board through the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling Through Education (TRUE) Grant Program. The TRUE Grant Program supports the state's strategic plan for higher education through creating, expanding, and redesigning workforce education and training programs in high-demand fields. Programs supported by TRUE funds are less than six months long, aligned to industry, focused on high-value and high-demand fields, and developed collaboratively with state workforce stakeholders.

The **Utah** System of Higher Education's Talent Ready Utah, in conjunction with the Governor's office, has **partnered** with the Republic of Austria to enhance the state's Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection, career and technical education, and technical college apprenticeship programs. Utah and Austria jointly agree to diversify and improve apprenticeship programs, encourage industry partnerships, and support student exchanges.

The Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships at the University of **Vermont** (UVM) has **announced** \$2.4 million in USDA-NIFA grant funding for 16 projects at 20 UVM research programs. The awarded projects are focused on partnering with the community to offer solutions to pressing challenges in the state such as veterinary medicine, rural immigration, student health and performance, climate-related career opportunities, and telehealth services in rural libraries. In addition to offering community-based solutions, the programs are designed to enhance research and learning on campus.

The State Council for Higher Education for **Virginia** (SHEV) is **partnering** with the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP) to award over \$3.9 million in grants to 20 institutions to support paid internships and work-based learning opportunities for students. The Impact Grants are intended to enhance partnerships between higher education institutions and employers. SHEV and V-TOP also **announced** over \$500,000 in grants to four higher education institutions to transform their on-campus federal work-study jobs into internships.

The **Washington** Student Achievement Council (WSAC) has **received** a \$3 million investment to increase the capacity and impact of the state's regional partnerships, including the Regional Challenge Grant (RCG). RCG supports cross-sector regional partnerships in Washington and aims to improve the state's postsecondary attainment among adults to 70 percent. The investment allows WSAC to support small, rural RCG partnerships, expand the program's geographic reach into new communities, and improve students' economic mobility through postsecondary attainment and career training.

ACCESS, PREPARATION, & ENROLLMENT

APPLICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

The **Kentucky** Council on Postsecondary Education and GEAR UP Kentucky have **introduced** the "I'm In! College Acceptance Video Challenge" for current high school seniors. Participants are encouraged to submit videos of themselves reading their college acceptance notifications. Selected videos will be featured in a statewide television commercial, and one student will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship through a live, virtual drawing. The initiative aims to celebrate students' achievements and supports the state's goal of having 60% of working-age Kentuckians with a postsecondary credential by 2030.

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education **launched** a direct admissions program in partnership with Niche Direct Admissions. Starting with the class of 2025, high school seniors will receive real-time acceptance and scholarship offers to three participating universities. The program aims to modernize admissions and reduce barriers, particularly benefiting first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented minority students.

The **Tennessee** Higher Education Commission **announced** findings indicating that the Advise TN program has increased college enrollment rates among high school students in rural areas (8%), women (7%), and Hispanic students (16%). The study also found that students who met with an advisor four or more times were 31% more likely to pursue postsecondary education than those with only one meeting. These results highlight the effectiveness of personalized and sustained advising in promoting higher education enrollment.

The State Council of Higher Education for **Virginia**, in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education and Commonwealth Savers, **awarded** more than \$126,000 to 10 colleges and universities to support the third year of the Middle School Campus Visit Project. The project introduces young students to the possibilities of higher education, sparking their interest in postsecondary pathways early in their academic journey. The initiative will engage approximately 4,225 middle school students from low-income communities.

COLLEGE ACCESS

Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey **awarded** \$8 million in Early College grants as educational institutions create and expand early college programs. The funding will be put toward an estimated additional 2,300 seats rounding out to 9,000; increasing staffing and recruitment; and providing professional development. Early college programs are a key part of the administration's "Reimagining High School" initiative, ensuring Massachusetts students are prepared for college or careers when they graduate high school.

Massachusetts has **responded** to the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling with recommendations from the Healey-Driscoll Administration to strengthen recruitment, admissions, and enrollment policies to support historically underrepresented students.

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) **launched** the inaugural class of the SUNY Accessibility Advocates and Allies Faculty Fellowship Program. This initiative aims to enhance digital accessibility and promote Universal Design for Learning practices across SUNY campuses, ensuring inclusive education for all students. The 11 faculty will work collaboratively to implement strategies that support diverse learning needs, reflecting SUNY's commitment to excellence and inclusivity. Over 10% of SUNY students self-identify as having a disability, highlighting the importance of such programs in fostering an accessible learning environment.

Oklahoma secured its fifth consecutive GEAR UP grant, totaling \$34.7 million over seven years, to enhance college readiness among middle and high school students. Administered by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, this grant will serve over 16,000 students across 13 rural school districts, offering services such as campus tours, ACT preparation, and enrollment assistance.

The **Tennessee** Department of Disability and Agility provided \$500,000 in grants through its Tennessee Believes program to support higher education institutions in creating inclusive opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This funding is part of a \$1 million allocation, with the initial \$500,000 already distributed to existing recipients. In 2024, programs supported by Tennessee Believes benefited 164 students, who completed 652 classes and 129 internships and saw 58 students graduate.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

The **Ohio** Department of Higher Education has consulted with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce to provide a total of \$3 million in grants to four education service centers in the state to support graduate coursework for high school educators to become credentialed to teach College Credit Plus courses at their high school.

The **Pennsylvania** Department of Education announced the availability of \$14 million in grant funding to expand dual credit programs across the state. These grants aim to help public institutions of higher education increase access to dual credit courses, allowing high school students, particularly those from underserved communities, to earn both high school and college credits simultaneously.

The **South Dakota** Board of Regents announced the expansion of its Gateway Certificate Program, introducing three new certificates in agriculture, engineering, and business for high school students enrolled in dual credit courses. These programs aim to provide early exposure to university-level academics and career-focused coursework, allowing students to earn college credits while exploring potential career paths and preparing for today's competitive job market.

The **West Virginia** Higher Education Policy Commission reported an 11.5% increase in high school dual enrollment through public universities, attributed to the LevelUpWV initiative. Launched in 2023, LevelUpWV is a state-funded program that allows high school students to take college courses for free, focusing on high-demand career pathways such as health care, information technology, and engineering. In its first year, 4,600 students from 52 counties participated, and has grown to more than 6,700 students.

ENROLLMENT

Many states saw record enrollment numbers for the fall of 2024, including:

- The University System of **Georgia** (USG) achieved a record enrollment of 364,725 students, marking a 5.9% increase from the previous year and surpassing the national growth rate of 2.9%. Research universities experienced the most significant growth (9,873 students or a 6.6% increase).
- **Illinois** public universities experienced their highest enrollment in eight years, totaling 185,590 students – a 1.6% increase from the previous year. Notably, African American undergraduate enrollment grew by 2.8%, and Latino undergraduate enrollment increased by 1.4%.
- **Indiana** public higher education enrollment saw the largest one-year increase (2%) since fall 2010. This is the second year of increases coming off a 12-year decline.
- The **Kentucky** Council on Postsecondary Education announced a 3.9% increase in undergraduate enrollment at public universities and a 4.9% increase in community and technical college enrollment. Campuses saw record enrollments for first-time, minority, and dual credit students, and enrollment of non-traditional adult students grew 8% after several years of declines.

FAFSA COMPLETION

The **Arizona** Board of Regents (ABOR), in collaboration with the Governor's Office and the AZ FAFSA Coalition, is **spearheading** several initiatives to assist students and families in navigating the FAFSA process. This includes a nationally recognized Peer Coaching Program that is being modeled in other states and a partnership with the Cactus League to offer tickets to a spring training baseball game for FAFSA completers. To further empower and rally the education community, ABOR has **released** its 2025–26 FAFSA Completion and FSA ID Creation Dashboards to track progress and target support where it's most needed.

The **Michigan** Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) **launched** the Universal FAFSA Challenge, offering shares of \$10 million in funding to local school districts and public school academies who apply and qualify. Funding will be used to integrate FAFSA completion into their high school graduation requirements and implement evidence-based FAFSA completion strategies and activities to provide students with essential support throughout the application process.

The **Nevada** System of Higher Education (NSHE) **announced** the inaugural Nevada FAFSA Challenge, a statewide competition to increase FAFSA completion rates among high school seniors. The challenge invites high schools participating in NSHE's FAFSA Completion Initiative to compete for the most improved FAFSA completion rate compared to the previous year. The winning school will receive a \$1,000 prize and a recognition banner, while schools achieving 100% FAFSA completion will be honored at an upcoming NSHE Board of Regents meeting and featured on the NSHE and Apply Nevada websites.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

The **Colorado** Commission on Higher Education's Colorado Open Education Resource (OER) Grant Program **approved** \$1M to support 21 OER projects in December. The grants will provide no-cost educational materials to Colorado students. Ten awards are focused on "catalyzing OER expertise at rural institutions of higher education." Entering its seventh year, the OER Grant Program has "save[d] Colorado students more than \$42.1M in textbook costs and transformed over 1,900 courses at no cost" by leveraging OER resources, training, and technologies.

The **North Dakota** University System **approved** a policy in January to promote OER by approving a policy to cut the costs of textbooks and student materials. The policy will take place in August 2025 and will provide guidance requiring system institutions to address the affordability of instructional materials and encourage faculty professional development related to OER.

STUDENT SUCCESS & COLLEGE COMPLETION

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, CURRICULUM, AND TRANSFER

The **California** State University (CSU) has **selected** 11 CSU campuses to receive funding to boost the number of credit-bearing programs that connect ethnic concepts to gender and sexuality studies. This initiative is part of a grant from the Mellon Foundation.

The University of **Hawai'i** is **improving** pathway alignment and credit transfer among UH campuses to support students in teacher preparation programs. Sixty representatives from the 10 campuses gathered to simplify and streamline transfer among education programs, including the expansion of online access and the creation of cross-campus working groups. The convening is just one component of the state's efforts to address workforce needs in education.

The University of **Maine** System **launched** two new high-demand degree programs in January. The new Associate of Science in Cybersecurity and Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Business are part of a broader strategic effort to grow Maine's economy and meet engineering and computing workforce needs.

The State University of **New York** (SUNY) **adopted** recommendations from a task force seeking to improve transfer between SUNY campuses, especially for students transferring from community colleges to baccalaureate-granting institutions. The task force developed 32 recommendations focusing on maximizing credit acceptance and major applicability, providing transparency and consistency in the transfer process, offering system-wide personnel and financial resources, and fostering system-wide transfer partnerships.

The **Oregon** Higher Education Coordinating Commission **announced** that 19 new courses were added to the state's common course number system, bringing the total number of commonly numbered courses to 37. The new courses were approved through a streamlined process that places common course numbering approval under the authority of a Transfer Council made up of institutional faculty and academic administrators.

The **South Dakota** Board of Regents **announced** the creation of a new civics proficiency graduation requirement that will be embedded in the general education programming block. Learning outcomes will be developed by a faculty workgroup and focus on civic knowledge, values, and skills. The initiative is part of an ongoing partnership between the Board of Regents and the South Dakota Legislature to ensure students are prepared to actively participate in civic life after graduation.

The **South Dakota** Board of Regents **approved** two new programs that are designed to meet the workforce needs of the state. The Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Business will be offered in collaboration with two institutions and include an internship requirement. The Executive Master of Business Administration is designed to improve the strategic planning, leadership, and business skills of current professionals..

ADULT LEARNERS

The **Illinois** Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has **launched** the Statewide Re-enrollment Strategy grant to support adult learners who left college without earning a degree aligning with the state's strategic plan. The initiative focuses on re-engagement, wraparound student services, financial support, and tailored teaching methods for adult students. IBHE seeks proposals from organizations to implement a coordinated strategy that will impact long-term statewide re-enrollment trends.

The **New Jersey** Office of the Secretary of Higher Education has **announced** the continuation of its 'Some College, No Degree' initiative into its third year, aiming to re-engage adult learners who have previously halted their education. In partnership with ReUp Education and 22 higher education institutions, the program has successfully supported over 8,600 residents in re-enrolling, with more than 350 completing their degrees through dedicated coaching and career services.

The University of **North Carolina** (UNC) System has **announced** that Project Kitty Hawk has increased enrollment by 65% since Fall 2024, jumping to 923 students. The project is a nonprofit affiliate of the UNC System that assists the state's public colleges and universities in launching online degree programs for adults.

The **Tennessee** Higher Education Commission (THEC) has **released** an inaugural report on Navigate Reconnect, a coaching and advising program for adults. The study found that participants who worked with a Navigate Reconnect coach had persistence and completion rates 11 percentage points higher than those who did not utilize the coaching services. The program offers free academic coaching, financial aid assistance, and access to local resources such as childcare and affordable transportation.

THEC and the **Tennessee** Board of Regents **announced** a partnership with Ithaka S+R to enhance educational opportunities for adult learners in the state. This initiative focuses on assisting individuals who have previously earned college credits but did not complete their degrees, particularly those facing barriers such as account holds. The project will convene leaders from Tennessee's community colleges to develop and implement strategies aimed at facilitating degree completion for these adult learners.

COLLEGE COMPLETION AND STUDENT SUCCESS

The **California** State University (CSU) **hosted** its fifth annual Young Males of Color Conference at Cal Poly Pomona, attracting nearly 600 participants, including over 300 students, as well as faculty and staff from 23 universities and more than 20 California community colleges. The event focused on improving access, retention, transfer, and graduation rates for Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and Native American men.

The **Colorado** Department of Higher Education **announced** the First Generation-Serving Campus designation to honor higher education institutions that provide exceptional support to first-generation college students. The designation seeks to highlight and promote campuses that offer tailored resources and programs to assist first-generation students in navigating higher education.

The **Louisiana** Board of Regents **received** a \$3.8 million multi-year grant to enhance student success across the state's public postsecondary institutions. The funding will support the implementation of evidence-based practices aimed at improving student outcomes statewide. Additionally, the Board approved the establishment of a Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation at Nicholls State University, marking the state's first program of its kind.

The Healey-Driscoll Administration in **Massachusetts** **announced** that it is awarding \$14 million from the fiscal year 2025 budget to enhance student success programs across the nine state universities. This funding supports services such as peer mentoring, academic skills workshops, and advising, with a focus on increasing graduation rates. This initiative marks the first time that student success grants are available to state universities, expanding support previously provided to community colleges.

The **North Carolina** Community College System (NCCCS) **announced** the launch of the NC Community Colleges Boost program modeled after the City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (CUNY ASAP), renowned for doubling graduation rates in various states. The Boost program will initially be implemented at eight community colleges, with plans to expand to seven additional colleges next year. It focuses on fields such as biotechnology, health care, engineering, advanced manufacturing, and information technology, aiming to align educational outcomes with North Carolina's workforce development goals.

STUDENT PARENTS

The **Minnesota** Office of Higher Education has **awarded** \$5.3 million in grants to 13 organizations to support student parents. As part of a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health, these grants are designed to fund initiatives that address barriers to college success for parents, such as access to childcare, mental health support, and stable housing.

The **Pennsylvania** Department of Education has **created** a Parent Pathways Grant to support parenting students in higher education. The state has allocated \$1.61 million to institutions to provide financial assistance, emergency funds, and wrap-around support services to better support students with children.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY & BASIC NEEDS

FINANCIAL AID AND STUDENT LOANS

Connecticut is addressing affordability through a Student Loan Reimbursement Program **launched** in January 2025, which will provide up to \$5,000 per year for four years to eligible borrowers working in high-need fields like health care and education. To further support student borrowers, Connecticut has also **established** its first Office of the Student Loan Ombudsperson to assist borrowers with repayment options, dispute resolution, and loan forgiveness programs.

Indiana has **automatically enrolled** over 90,000 students in the 21st Century Scholars program for the 2027 and 2028 cohorts, covering up to full tuition at eligible colleges and universities for students from low-income backgrounds. Program enrollment has increased due to 2023 legislation allowing for automatically enrolling all financially-eligible students.

Tennessee's Tennessee Promise program **reported** a record-breaking 67,000 applications from high school seniors in the Class of 2025, allowing them to attend eligible community and technical colleges tuition-free.

STUDENT BASIC NEEDS AND SAFETY

Minnesota State has **partnered** with Mantra Health to provide 24/7 mental health services to students. The Mantra Health services include digital peer-to-peer support, emotional wellness coaching, therapy, and video consultation with trained mental health professionals.

New Jersey has **awarded** \$1.2 million in Hunger-Free Campus Act grants to 34 institutions to expand on-campus food pantries and emergency food assistance programs.

In **Ohio**, Governor Mike DeWine **announced** \$7.5 million in campus safety grants for 28 colleges and universities to improve lighting, emergency communication systems, and security measures.

The **Washington** Student Experience Survey **revealed** that many students face challenges related to food insecurity, housing instability, and mental health. The report highlights a pressing need for expanded basic needs services and mental health resources on campuses to support student success.

VALUE, ROI, & TRANSPARENCY

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The **Kentucky** Council on Postsecondary Education **released** a report in partnership with the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Kentucky calculating the return on investment (ROI) of funding for state universities and financial aid. The report found a \$4.50 return for every dollar invested in Kentucky higher education.

The University of **Wyoming** (UW) **published** "Economic Footprint of the University of Wyoming" in November. The report highlights the outsized economic activity based on the organizational size that UW brings to the state. Among the findings are that UW's "contribution to the gross state product (GSP)...grew from 0.3% in the 2013-2014 fiscal year to 1.8% in the 2022-2023 fiscal year." Further, UW alumni contribution increases UW's impact on GSP to 2.3%.

POST-GRADUATION OUTCOMES

As the **California** State University system **embarks** on its new graduation initiative, Beyond Completion, will still track graduation rates but will include a focus on post-graduation outcomes, as well. Including the input from students, employees, alumni, and others. Beyond Completion works strengthen the CSU's ties to industry partners and improve student pipelines.

TRANSPARENCY

The **Indiana** Commission for Higher Education **released** its new “State of Higher Education in Indiana” report, which highlights the goals of the Hoosier Opportunities and Possibilities through Education (HOPE) Agenda, which articulates the agency’s strategic goals. The report and associated HOPE dashboard provide current information and data insights associated with those goals.

The **Kentucky** Council for Postsecondary Education recently **unveiled** its new education and career exploration website, Futuriti. Futuriti is a “career and college access platform” that has been in development since 2021. It aims to connect learners at all levels to “advising resources and information regarding early postsecondary opportunities, postsecondary institutions, career pathways, and financial aid information.” The website highlights job descriptions, wages, in-demand careers, career pathways, college majors, and cost, completion, and debt information on postsecondary institutions in the state.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, FREE SPEECH, & PUBLIC PURPOSES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In **Connecticut**, Governor Lamont **announced** mini-grants of up to \$8,000 for youth-led service and service-learning projects through Serve Connecticut.

The University of **Wyoming** **released** a survey in November showing that most residents approve of its undergraduate education, workforce preparation, and efforts to keep tuition low.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

In **Arizona**, the Board of Regents **selected** teams for the sixth annual 2025 Regents’ Cup, a tri-university speech and debate competition awarding over \$100,000 in scholarships.

The **Idaho** State Board of Education **approved** a resolution affirming its commitment to freedom of expression in higher education.

The Universities of **Wisconsin** **presented** their annual report to the Board of Regents on efforts to promote civil discourse and academic freedom through campus events, training modules, and system-wide initiatives.

SUSTAINABILITY

The **Arizona** Board of Regents has **awarded** a research grant that will fund an effort by the Arizona State University and the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs to use artificial intelligence to strengthen disaster planning and response in the state.

In **New York**, U.S. Senators Schumer and Gillibrand **secured** \$15 million for the State University of New York (SUNY) to install up to 350 electric vehicle charging stations, advancing the system’s clean energy initiatives.

New York has also **unveiled** \$150 million in climate resiliency grants for colleges and universities in the state. SUNY will receive \$100 million for clean energy projects, while the City University of New York will receive \$50 million for solar, energy storage, and heat pump projects at three campuses.