



## Women In Government Higher Education Task Force State Policy Recommendations

*The following policy recommendations were developed by Women In Government's Higher Education Task Force. The Task Force was first formed in 2003, and consists of a national, bipartisan group of state legislators.*

### **Task Force Mission Statement**

The mission of the Women In Government Higher Education Task Force is to increase access to and success in postsecondary education in the United States for adult learners in general, and women specifically where appropriate. The Task Force will achieve these goals through the identification of sound research, best practices, and innovative policy ideas and programs that serve to inform legislators as they shape public policy and support state economic and social advancement.

### **Prior Learning Assessments (PLAs)**

States should review current practices to ensure that postsecondary institutions have clear policies for the awarding of college credit for knowledge demonstrated both inside and outside of postsecondary education instruction and that state financial aid policies support student use of Prior Learning Assessments. Accepted methods should be used to award credits for equivalent knowledge demonstrated through: courses taken at other in-state or out-of-state postsecondary institutions, knowledge garnered from professional experiences, and knowledge demonstrated through portfolio evaluations in addition to nationally recognized examinations.

### **Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs)**

States should convene working groups to educate employers, employees, and policymakers of the advantages of LiLAs and move toward the enactment of LiLA policies to leverage state, employer, and employee funds to support adult learners in saving for postsecondary education. States should identify specific workforce needs in high-priority sectors and develop pilot LiLA programs targeting these sectors, taking all opportunities to connect LiLAs with existing saving and funding programs. States should work with federal policymakers to ensure continuity between state and federal LiLA policies.

### **Recruitment & Retention of Adult Learners**

In order to remain competitive in tomorrow's global economy, the US must produce 16 million more college degrees by 2025.<sup>1</sup> To meet this need, states should design and implement public awareness campaigns aimed at both students and employers. Furthermore, to recruit and retain adult learners, stakeholders should ensure institutions create programs, which take into consideration individual circumstances and are consistent with high academic standards. In particular states and institutions should recruit more women into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, as well as other in-need and underrepresented fields.

### **Collaboration of Stakeholders**

A comprehensive approach to expand educational programs for adults includes the collaboration of federal, state, and local agencies and policymakers, and the involvement of the entire education community. A myriad of stakeholders should be engaged in these efforts, including: adult learners, financial aid organizations, the media, advocacy organizations, accreditation bodies, higher education institutions, state education coordinating boards, employers and the entire business community. Stakeholders should collaborate to advance policies and programs that support adult learners, such as: hosting a statewide summit, ensuring P-20 initiatives include the recruitment of adults and creating a state strategic plan for adult learning and workforce development.

### **State Financial Aid Policies**

States should make appropriate changes to financial aid policies that reduce procedural barriers and support adult learners in achieving educational goals. States should creatively use resources to fill gaps in federal aid programs; for example, expanding support for part-time and certificate students, or providing aid to students in noncredit courses and programs. States should consider changing funding formulae for adult education, supporting at-risk students, prioritizing expenditures for diverse populations, establishing navigators to help adults through financial aid systems, expanding work study opportunities and examining the oversight of adult education to ensure the most effective placement of these programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, Jobs for the Future for Making Opportunity Affordable. "Adding it Up: State Challenges for Increasing College Access and Success." Accessed on August 5, 2008, from: [www.makingopportunityaffordable.org/wp-content/adding\\_it\\_up/Adding\\_It\\_Up.pdf](http://www.makingopportunityaffordable.org/wp-content/adding_it_up/Adding_It_Up.pdf)