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SHEEO Announces the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education Co-chaired by Former Education Secretary Richard W. Riley and Former Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating

Denver, Colorado - With financial support from the Ford Foundation, the association of State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) has launched a National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education consisting of former governors, legislative leaders, state higher education executives, institutional leaders, and business representatives.

The Commission will be co-chaired by the former Governor of Oklahoma, Frank Keating, and the former Governor of South Carolina and former Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley.

Valerie Lewis, Commissioner of Higher Education in Connecticut and current president of SHEEO, said, "Ambitious education goals, such as achieving more successful participation in higher education, are becoming an urgent priority in every state. This Commission will study what has been learned about using accountability systems to improve performance and make recommendations for future progress."

"In Oklahoma," Governor Keating commented, "our *Brain Gain* initiative is working to increase the percentage of citizens with a baccalaureate degree from 20.1% to 28% and to double the percentage holding an associate degree from 5% to 10% between 1998 and 2010. We need educational progress on this scale to sustain economic health in this country. It will take the very best thinking of educators and policymakers to do the job."

Secretary Riley indicated that the Commission will sort through the most effective approaches to improving performance and identify the ways that state and federal policymakers and educators can contribute to progress. "We need to be clear about goals and responsibilities, and we need to monitor results," Riley said. "Many people, ranging from instructors in the classroom to federal decision makers, play critical roles in achieving education progress. We need approaches on accountability that make sense for each of those levels and that help people become more successful in meeting their responsibilities."

In preparation for the Commission's work, SHEEO is systematically reviewing the accountability systems developed in the states and working to identify cases in which individual states have achieved improved educational performance. The Commission also will solicit testimony and assemble a panel of experts to provide further input.

"Setting objectives and measuring performance are fundamental to accountability," added Paul Lingenfelter, executive director of SHEEO. "But the point is not simply to monitor performance, but to improve it. We hope the report of this Commission will help policymakers and education leaders become more successful in getting the results they seek."

The first meeting of the Commission will be held May 10th in Washington, DC, and the final report is expected before the end of the calendar year.

A complete list of the Commission members follows:

National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education

Co-Chairs:

The Honorable Frank Keating, President, American Council of Life Insurers
Former Governor of Oklahoma

The Honorable Richard W. Riley, Senior Partner, Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough, L.P.
Former U.S. Secretary of Education and Governor of South Carolina

Commission Members:

Kenneth H. Ashworth, Adjunct Professor, University of Texas, LBJ School of Public Affairs; Adjunct Professor,
George Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University
Former Texas Commissioner of Higher Education

Dwight Evans, President, External Affairs Group, Southern Company

Stanley Ikenberry, President Emeritus, Professor of Education, University of Illinois
Former President, American Council on Education

Roberts Jones, Education & Workforce Policy, LLC
Former President, National Alliance of Business

Thomas D. Layzell, President, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

The Honorable Carol Liu, Chair, California Assembly Committee on Higher Education

The Honorable Dave Nething, Senator, North Dakota Legislature
Former President, National Conference of State Legislatures

The Honorable Lana Oleen, Kansas Senate Majority Leader
Chair, Midwestern Higher Education Compact

Richard Pattenaude, President, University of Southern Maine

Martha Romero, Founding Director, Community College Leadership Development Initiatives; Professor,
Claremont Graduate University

Blenda J. Wilson, President & CEO, Nellie Mae Education Foundation

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The State Higher Education Executive Officers, located in Denver, Colorado, is the national association of the chief executives of statewide governing boards and coordinating boards of postsecondary education. The mission of the association is to assist its members and the states in developing and sustaining excellent systems of higher education.

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