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State Receives Grant to Increase College Completion Rates

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A \$1 million grant will help the state develop new programs.

By Whitney Burdette

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West Virginia has been awarded a \$1 million grant to further policy innovations and reforms to increase college completion rates, acting Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin announced August 9.

West Virginia was chosen as one of ten states to receive the grant, which is provided by Complete College America as part of its national Completion Innovation Challenge grant competition. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided funding support for the program.

"This funding gives us an additional enhancement in the state's overall effort to assist students in obtaining the education they need to prepare for the future they want," Tomblin said. "The road to a college degree is not always easy and this grant should be encouraging to everyone who works hard to help young people achieve their goals."

Governors from all 50 states were invited to submit proposals to win one of 10 \$1 million grants for innovative, high-impact college completion initiatives designed to enhance student success and close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented students. As a winning state, West Virginia was determined to have one of the nation's most promising strategies to make it easier for students to complete college.



"Gov. Tomblin gets it—doing more of the same will not boost student success or get West Virginia the additional college graduates it must have to be competitive," said Stan Jones, president of Complete College America. "It's long past time for bold innovation in higher education to remove unnecessary obstacles to success, fix broke policies that hold students back, speed achievement and redesign pathways to college graduation for the new majority of students who must balance work and school."

With the grant money, West Virginia will:

Develop standard learning objectives for developmental math and English courses which will clearly identify what students need to know before entering college-level course work, set clear expectations for students and provide a common tool for faculty to use;

Develop modular developmental math and English classroom and online curricula that enable students to focus on skill development only in the areas where they are deficient;

Develop credit-bearing introductory stretch math and English courses that will be available to any college in West Virginia and serve those students in need of some remediation but enable them to earn credits toward graduation right away.

"West Virginia's innovative plan to transform remediation promises to significantly increase college completion, saving students precious time and money and giving taxpayers more of what they expect from their hard-earned investments in higher education: College grads," Jones said.

This is the first year for the Complete College America grant program.

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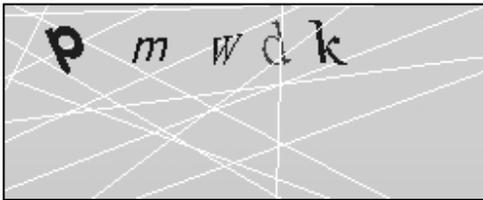
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