MILLER CENTER of PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

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Governors and Education Leaders
Discuss Ways to Improve Higher Education
in a Struggling Economy
Recommendations to be Released Early Next Year

December 8, 2010 — Current and former governors, university and college presidents, chancellors of several state university systems, and other national education leaders gathered this week at the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs to examine strategies to improve higher education in a struggling economy, including how to increase the number of Americans with college degrees.

Participants in "Raising the Bar for Higher Education in a Time of Fiscal Constraints" included Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman, vice chair of the National Governors Association (NGA); Ray Scheppach, executive director of the NGA; Gordon Davies, former director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia; former Wyoming Gov. Jim Geringer, a founder of the online Western Governors University; Virginia Tech President Charles Steger; and Leonard Sandridge, executive vice president and chief operating officer of U.Va.

The meeting was hosted by the Miller Center, the NGA, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Gerald L. Baliles, director of the Miller Center, opened the conference with a challenge.

"We have to advance new proposals for funding higher education if we are going to regain our long-term economic prosperity," he said. "We need to have courageous policymakers to make that happen. So we've brought you all here today to help develop a road map that the Miller Center, Association of Governing Boards, National Governors Association and the National Conference

of State Legislatures can take forward to help us solve the dilemma of how we increase production in a time of dwindling resources."

"This meeting occurred at a critical time, and involved an important mix of people. Board leaders, presidents and chancellors, state legislators and governors must work together to solve the challenges facing higher education today. Otherwise, we won't make the progress we need to make as a nation toward educational attainment and economic development," said Richard D. Legon, president of AGB. "AGB appreciates its partnership with the Miller Center and the support Governor Baliles has shown higher education over the years. We expect the outcome of this meeting to be very productive."

At the meeting, officials discussed several topics, including:
- The impact of limited state revenues, increased tuition, higher student debt and federal mandates
- Policy responses to increase the number of college degrees and certificates attained
- Institutional changes, such as restructuring how educational services are delivered and how business operations are conducted, that could cut operating costs yet enhance productivity
- Strategies for developing and mobilizing a state public education agenda.

Conference participants explored several ideas to help solve some of the problems facing higher-education, including: conveying the importance of higher education as a way to economic well-being; diversifying income sources; forging new partnerships with community colleges, K-12 schools, and the business community; and discussing the role of for-profit education, including online schools.

A report on the meeting's recommendations and a webcast of the conference will be released early next year.

Founded in 1975, the Miller Center of Public Affairs is a leading nonpartisan public policy institution that aims to fulfill Jefferson's public service mission by serving as a national meeting place for engaged citizens, scholars, students, media representatives, and government officials to research, reflect, and report on issues of national importance to the governance of the United States, with special attention to the central role and history of the presidency.

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