



Gerald L. Baliles, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2011

Contacts:

Kristy Schantz 202-758-3918

kkschantz@virginia.edu

Amanda Adolph 202-776-0827

amandaa@agb.org

The Miller Center & AGB
Release Higher-Education Report
Report Recommends Ways to Increase Number of Graduates

The Miller Center at the University of Virginia and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) today released a report outlining recommendations to increase the number of Americans who finish college and other certificate programs, stressing that such a goal is necessary to ensure that the U.S. economy remains competitive. Recommendations include making online instruction more readily available and rethinking the role of the federal government in higher education.

The report, "Front and Center: Critical Choices for Higher Education" is based on a December 2010 conference that convened individuals and organizations responsible for higher education. Participants included current and former governors, university and college presidents, chancellors of several state university systems, and other national education leaders. Besides the Miller Center and AGB, the conference was also sponsored by the National Governors Association and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"We believe that whether America will be a better or worse nation a generation from now will depend on the performance of our higher education system. We must find the will, the resources, and the capacity to change if we are to have a secure and prosperous country – one with a more educated citizenry with the skills and knowledge to be successful," said Miller Center director Gerald L. Baliles.

"Higher education must be affordable and accessible for all of our citizens, and the substantial investments by governments and individuals must lead to better outcomes in terms of the number and quality of diplomas and certificates produced. This will require adequate state and federal resources to be sure, but

at the same time, it is incumbent upon colleges and universities to increase productivity and efficiency,” said AGB president Richard Legon.

The report outlines several recommendations:

- **Promote—and reward—institutional changes that increase the number of persons who successfully complete higher-education degree and certificate programs.** Changes include devoting a greater percentage of operating budgets to instruction; reducing administrative overhead; focusing research efforts at fewer institutions; increasing faculty teaching responsibilities; adopting tighter, more focused curricula with key learning objectives; and meeting the varying needs of different students, especially those who attend college part-time. Online instruction is an important way to reduce costs and the time it takes to finish school.
- **Reconsider the federal role in higher education.** The federal government can play a strong leadership role in improving our education system by stressing the importance of increased rates of college completion; convening state leaders to discuss issues that require interstate cooperation; aligning its student financial aid and other funding programs with a student success and completion agenda; and clarifying its regulatory responsibilities for higher education.
- **Create an environment at the state level that will give institutions reasons to pursue the public agenda.** State-level governing and coordinating boards, working with governors and legislators, should assume two major responsibilities: setting clear, measurable, and institution-specific performance goals for colleges and universities; and creating funding mechanisms that link to those goals, such as emphasizing the completion of courses and programs of study, not just enrollment.
- **Provide leadership to help colleges and universities do the work that needs to be done.** Leadership is needed at all levels of involvement. Institutional governing boards need to establish completion agendas for their institutions, supporting the leadership of administrators and the efforts of faculty, and insist upon accountability for results. Governors and state legislatures must help define a college completions agenda and target resources toward it. The federal government can provide leadership by setting national goals and providing incentives for meeting them.

The full report is available at <http://millercenter.org/policy/higher-education>.

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.

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) is the only national association that serves the interests and needs of academic governing boards, boards of institutionally related foundations, and campus CEOs and other senior-level campus administrators on issues related to higher education governance and leadership. Founded in 1921, AGB's mission is to strengthen and protect this country's unique form of institutional governance through its research, services, and advocacy. AGB is committed to citizen trusteeship of American higher education. <http://agb.org/>

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