Date: March 6, 2014

To: SHEEO Members of the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment

From: George Pernsteiner

Subject: MSC Project Responsibilities during Year One of Pilot

Thank you again for joining this exciting and important effort to use real student work to assess real student learning. You are breaking new ground and undertaking a project that will make a difference for our students, for our institutions, for our states, and for our nation.

The project now is well-launched as each state SHEEO has identified both a state lead and the colleges and universities who will participate in this important first phase of the MSC pilot. You are present at the creation—and, using the VALUE rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, you and your faculty will become the creators of this authentic learning assessment framework, approach, and tool.

For many months, the Working Group, under the able and visionary leadership of Pat Crosson of Massachusetts, has collectively made the important decisions that have gotten us to this point. As I mentioned to those of you who met with us in Boulder in December, we now will be transitioning the project leadership and the project structure to a more streamlined model that will allow us to be successful in the pilot over the next year. At the same time, we also will be establishing the approach we will take to the design of the next steps of this work, hoping that the generous support that AAC&U has obtained for this project from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation can be renewed and extended.

The work of the first phase, funded under the subgrant we already have received, will be overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of the nine state leads plus Terry Rhodes of AAC&U and Julie Carnahan of SHEEO. Julie will convene the Steering Committee. Each of the subgroups of the original Working Group is represented on the Steering Committee. This means that as issues arise, the Steering Committee will have a ready way of consulting with cognizant subgroups to seek their counsel. A project design was approved by the Working Group in December. As we learn more during the pilot, it may become desirable or necessary to modify that design. Any major modifications will be communicated to appropriate subgroups, which are the successors to the Working Group for purposes of the pilot.

An advisory team, comprised of Gary Pike and Peter Ewell, will be charged with ensuring the integrity of the overall design and of the specifics that could affect the validity of the project’s results. Upon request, they will provide advice to the Steering Committee. They also will review the project on a periodic basis to make sure that its integrity is assured.
Most of the work of the pilot this year will be the responsibility of a newly constituted Pilot Study Team, chaired by Bonnie Orcutt. This is the successor to the Pilot Study Subgroup and will include members from each of the other subgroups. The Pilot Study Team will be the principal advisor to the Steering Committee during this year. Other subgroups will be consulted as issues arise within their areas of responsibility and expertise.

This change to the project’s management structure is being made so that decisions about this year’s work on the pilot project can be made in a timely way to help ensure that the project can meet its ambitious schedule.

As we learn more from the pilot and as our communications with both AAC&U and the Gates Foundation deepen, we will begin development of a plan for work to be done in subsequent years. We will be working with Terry Rhodes of AAC&U to prepare both plans and budgets for future years. I am hoping that we will be able to develop a multi-year plan and budget by early- to mid-summer in order to request and (hopefully) secure additional funding prior to the expiration of the current subgrant (November 30, 2014).

Julie Carnahan of SHEEO will be the project director for the MSC portion of the work. Terry Rhodes will lead efforts to select the vendor to provide the platform and database into which student artifacts will be uploaded. Bonnie Orcutt will lead an expanded Pilot Study Team to move us forward successfully during this crucial year.

I am confident this structure will help enable our success. I very much look forward to working with you on this exciting project.

Thank you.

Cc: Julie Carnahan
MSC Steering Committee members: Melissa Bell, Ken Doxee, Lisa Foss, Deborah Grossman-Garber, Karen Marrongelle, Rusty Monhollon, Bonnie Orcutt, Earl H. Potter III, Terry Rhodes, Teddi Safman, Ken Sauer, Ted Yungclass