

# PRESS RELEASE

## Educational Attainment Executive Council

**Cheyenne, March 15, 2019** - Officially codified by Governor Gordon in the 2019 General session of the Wyoming Legislature, the Educational Attainment Executive Council will move forward in achieving specific goals to increase educational attainment and economic opportunity for citizens, communities and businesses.

“This is a great step for Wyoming to bolster post-secondary educational attainment, and thus facilitate stronger economic vitality for our state. We are at a point where we have the different entities working together like never before including the Wyoming Department of Education, K12 school districts, the Wyoming Community College Commission, the seven community colleges, the University, the Department of Workforce Services, the Wyoming Business Council, the legislature and executive branches, and representation of the business community through the Wyoming Business Alliance and private sector,” University of Wyoming President and co-chair of the Council Laurie Nichols said. “Together we will make a stronger Wyoming long into the future.”

The original Executive Order for Educational Attainment, issued by Governor Mead in January 2018, emphasized that high-quality industry credentials and higher education degrees were connected to higher employment and increased earning power. At the time, just 45.8 percent of Wyoming citizens aged 25-64 had an industry credential or post-secondary degree.

Since that time, the Educational Attainment Executive Council (EAEC) has completed listening sessions throughout the state as well as numerous strategic steps forward in the preparation of creating a 5-year and 10-year Statewide Educational Master Plan to achieve the State's attainment goals of reaching 67 percent attainment by 2025 and 82 percent by 2040.

The recent legislative session produced bills that will be foundational for the EAEC's work in providing additional pathways to post-secondary education and industry credentials. Wyoming's Hathaway program (SEA 20 and SEA 39) had two areas of expansion; one to allow for increased access to career and technical classes in the curriculum and one to provide opportunities for students from contiguous states to utilize the Hathaway scholarship (two per state) in Wyoming.

Another bill referred to as the "Wyoming Works" bill provides funding for community college technical programs approved to meet labor and economic development needs. The Wyoming Investment in Nursing will continue to support the education of nurses in the state, and a bill to implement common transcripts across education systems from last year was studied in the interim and funded this session.

This morning Governor Gordon signed Senate File 111, the bachelor of applied science bill, which will allow community colleges to offer bachelors of applied science programs. These degrees will serve business and industry partnerships and offer specific industry focused bachelor's degrees, providing opportunities for adult workers to complete a bachelor's degree at a local community college. Students can also take an online BAS degree from the University of Wyoming.

"This legislation affords a greater opportunity for the business community and the higher education community to work closely to identify the present and future needs of Wyoming's employers. This legislation is a 'game changer' for workforce development," said Cindy DeLancey, President of the Wyoming Business Alliance.

The EAEC will leverage diverse partnerships, new legislation, and the ENDOW economic diversification plan to create the Statewide Educational Master Plan with areas of focus that include high school to college transition, adult learners, resident and non-resident educational attainment and retention, and strategies for access and success from Complete College Wyoming.

“I am excited by the momentum of our education attainment goals. The new legislation helps citizens in our great state get the educational credentials they need to meet workforce needs,” co-chair of the EAEC and President of Northwest College Stefani Hicswa said.