



## **Introduction to the Michigan Scholars Initiative**

The Michigan Scholars initiative is a simple, low-cost, high-impact strategy to motivate students to complete high school courses that prepare them for post secondary education, and careers. The initiative places business people in classrooms to promote the study of math, science, language arts, social studies and foreign language (the Michigan Scholars Course of study) immediately before students select high school courses. The initiative is managed by the Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence.

In 2005, Michigan Scholars will pilot programs to encourage students to commit to the Michigan Scholars Course of Study in **Saginaw City Schools, Howell Public Schools, and the Lansing Public Schools**. Along with State and business **incentives**, these communities will develop **support** for students who are pursuing the Michigan Scholars Course of Study and will offer **recognition** and **rewards** for students who complete the Course of Study.

**At the state level**, Michigan Scholars will advocate for policies that align with solid academic education of students and those of the recently released report of the Governor's Commission on Higher Education.

### **Michigan Scholars Course of study:**

- 4 credits in English
- 3 credits in math (algebra 1, geometry, algebra 2)
- 3 credits in basic lab science (biology, chemistry, physics)
- 3 credits in social studies (chosen from U.S. and world history, geography, economics, and government)
- 2 credits in the same foreign language

### **Partner Organizations:**

- The Office of Governor Jennifer Granholm
- Presidents Council of State Universities of Michigan
- Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals
- Michigan Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals
- Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence
- Michigan Department of Education
- Dow Chemical Company
- Partnership for Learning

**Pilot Districts and Partner Organizations:**

Howell Public Schools  
Howell Area Chamber of Commerce

Lansing School District  
Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Black Men Incorporated of Lansing  
Lansing Area Hispanic Business Association

Saginaw City School District  
Saginaw Business Education Partnership  
Dow Chemical Company

**Background:**

The Initiative is based on work done by employers and educators in Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia communities dating back to 1988. On August 29, 2002, President George W. Bush and U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige launched the State Scholars Initiative to support statewide business/education coalitions committed to improving the academic achievement of high-school students.

**The Need for Rigorous Coursework:**

Bureau of Labor Statistics projections show that 80% of the top 50 fastest-growing jobs will require education beyond high school and that 40% of all new jobs will require at least an associate's degree.<sup>1</sup> Employers offering jobs that do not require postsecondary education nonetheless seek employees who are proficient in reading, math, and science, and who can solve problems, work in teams, and communicate effectively. They look for employees who can learn new skills throughout their lives. Yet a large percentage of high-school students graduate without the solid academic foundation needed to succeed in higher education and the rapidly evolving workplace.

- Only three in ten students complete the minimum courses recommended for college entrance by the National Commission on Excellence in Education.
- Nearly one-half of postsecondary students require and take remedial coursework in college. Students who take remedial coursework are less likely to earn a degree than other students.

Business leaders concerned about the ability of the U.S. workforce to meet the increasingly technological demands of the workplace have been impressed by research that showed that completion of a rigorous course of study increases students' likelihood of postsecondary persistence and completion. In fact, students who complete a rigorous course of study earn degrees at twice the rate of those who do not.