

Summary Information about the "Tuning Texas" Initiative

- To help advance the work already underway to achieve the goals of the Texas higher education plan *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, and as part of the Lumina Foundation for Education's productivity initiative, in November 2008 Texas was one of 11 states to receive a one-year, \$150,000 planning grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to plan methods of making the opportunity of going to college more affordable for students and the state.
- In November 2009, Texas was one of seven states to receive a four-year, \$1.8 million productivity grant from Lumina Foundation to continue the work the state initiated under the planning grant. As part of this multi-year, Lumina-sponsored grant project, Texas will embark upon integrating the Tuning process as described below into the course-level alignment work that was piloted in 2009 through the efforts of the Voluntary Mechanical Engineering Transfer Curriculum Committee. Over the four-year grant period, the Tuning process will be applied to 16 academic discipline areas, beginning in 2010 with additional engineering fields.

Summary Information about the Lumina Foundation's "Tuning USA" Initiative

- In April 2009, and working with students, faculty members, and education officials from Indiana, Minnesota, and Utah, Lumina Foundation for Education initiated a year-long pilot project, "Tuning USA." The aim was to create a shared understanding among higher education's stakeholders of the subject-specific knowledge and transferable skills that students in six fields (biology, chemistry, education, history, physics, and graphic design) must demonstrate in each course and upon completion of a degree program.
- Through the Lumina-sponsored project, subject-area teams from the pilot states applied the Tuning methodology, a faculty-led approach that involves seeking input from students, recent graduates, and employers to establish criterion-referenced learning outcomes and competencies by degree level and subject area. Tuning is a key element of Europe's Bologna Process. The Bologna Process began in Bologna, Italy, in 1999 as a means of promoting transparency, coordination, and quality assurance among Europe's higher education systems.
- Tuning is the faculty-led process of "harmonizing" higher education programs and degrees. It involves creating a framework that establishes clear learning expectations for students in each subject area while balancing the need among programs to retain their academic autonomy and flexibility. The objective is not to standardize programs offered by different institutions but to better establish the quality and relevance of degrees in various academic disciplines.
- Potential benefits arising from the Tuning process include: transparency in communicating with education stakeholders; facilitating retention, especially among students from underserved groups, by creating clear pathways to degree completion; simplifying the process for students transferring credits between institutions; increasing student engagement in the learning process; and establishing the relevance of postsecondary programs to societal needs and workforce demands.
- The U.S. higher education system has used some Tuning-like processes. Learning outcomes have been defined in many institutional curricula, as part of state and system-level academic program review processes, through accreditation, as part of licensure requirements and professional boards, and through the efforts of national higher education associations. What the United States lacks, however, is a comprehensive approach to defining the learning outcomes representative of degrees in specific disciplines across different degree levels. Lumina wants to determine whether Tuning offers a potential approach for the United States to better define higher education learning outcomes on a wide scale.