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For Immediate Release:
November 21, 2008

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Summit Focuses on Roles of States in Expanding Higher Education Opportunities

Missouri leaders Join Midwest States at Policy Summit

Minneapolis, MN – Midwestern education, government and business leaders convened in Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 17-19, to discuss improving college access and completion as part of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Majority Floor Leader Senator Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, of the Missouri Senate served as MHEC's chair and was honored for his year term as chair of the commission.

The summit is part of *Making Opportunity Affordable*, a multi-year initiative of Lumina Foundation for Education and focuses on improving college access and completion through efforts to improve the overall productivity of colleges and universities. Lumina provided funding for the summit that focuses on education as the key to remaining competitive in a global information- and knowledge-based economy.

"It is clear that to achieve this goal we must find ways to make our colleges and universities affordable and productive by controlling the per-unit cost of delivering education and training," Shields said.
"Accomplishing this objective will require a fundamental change in the way higher education does business."

Other MHEC commissioners representing Missouri were President Gerald Brouder, Columbia College; Chancellor Thomas George, University of Missouri-St. Louis; Representative Gayle Kingery; and Robert Stein, commissioner of higher education for the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

Participants engaged in "difficult dialogues" to develop creative approaches and problem solving challenges facing higher education, including delivery systems, institutional structures, governance and cultural issues.

Following the two-day summit, MHEC commissioners and guests gathered for the MHEC annual meeting where they heard regional and national updates from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the Council of State Governments. Commissioners reported on higher education issues discussed during their respective 2008 state legislative sessions and highlighted some of the issues expected to surface in the 2009 legislative sessions.

The MHEC was founded in 1991 and consists of twelve states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. MHEC sponsors a variety of programs to reduce costs, to increase student access and to conduct policy research and analysis. The Compact is statutorily created and governed by a board composed of five commissioners from each member state. For more information about the Compact, visit www.mhec.org.

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