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From: Paul Manna, Assistant Professor, College of William and Mary

To: Spencer Foundation

Re: Final Report for Spencer Foundation Grant #200700134

Grant period: January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007

**Governing the schoolhouse in the American states:  
How institutions and money affect state policy outputs and student outcomes**

**Executive Summary**

The State Education Governance Study (SEGS) was proposed to answer two questions: How do the institutional relationships between governors, state legislators, state education departments, and state boards of education influence K-12 education policy outputs and student academic outcomes? How do state education finance systems, comprised of revenues from state, federal, and local sources, influence these same policy outputs and student outcomes?

During calendar year 2007, support from the Spencer Foundation helped me to make great progress toward answering those two questions. In particular, my assistants and I have begun (and in some cases finished) constructing several quantitative data sets that measure different aspects of state education policy, governance, and student success. We have also collected much documentary evidence, which will help us to combine our quantitative results with anecdotal studies of particular states and past events.

Three main tentative findings are apparent so far. First, our data on the institutional and financial dimensions of governance reveal much expected variation across the states. Second, states with relatively centralized governance systems appear to perform somewhat better in terms of student outcomes than states with more fragmented systems. Third, our work illustrates the difficulty, and the value, of developing consistent, reliable, and easily accessible longitudinal measures of state policy and student success.

The project has already begun to disseminate these findings and data in several formats. Three article-length papers are in progress, and will soon be submitted to journals for peer review. A book manuscript is also planned, and initial contacts with two university press editors about the project have been positive.

## 1. Focus of the Research

During calendar year 2007, the State Education Governance Study (SEGS) has focused on two primary research questions: How do the institutional relationships between governors, state legislators, state education departments, and state boards of education influence K-12 education policy outputs and student academic outcomes? How do state education finance systems, comprised of revenues from state, federal, and local sources, influence these same policy outputs and student outcomes?

## 2. Research Status

**2.1 Activities.** With the Spencer Foundation's support, I completed several activities during calendar year 2007 to examine my research questions. As this list shows, the main activity the grant funded was the collection and organization of several original data sets. This list summarizes the main activities.

- Employment of four William and Mary undergraduate research assistants. Grant funds provided these students with valuable hands-on research experience, comparable to what one would have as a graduate assistant in a Ph.D. program in political science or public policy. Two of these students are co-authors on conference papers that are forthcoming in 2008, and that will eventually be submitted to peer-reviewed journals.
- A total of seven research trips to these sites.
  - Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO
  - National Archives, College Park, MD
  - National Association of State Boards of Education, Alexandria, VA (2 trips)
  - National Library of Education, US Department of Education, Washington, DC
  - New York State Archives, Gordon Ambach Papers Collection, Albany, NY (2 trips)
- Construction of a quantitative data set on state education governance structures from 1975-2007. These data capture the institutional dimension of governance described in the grant proposal.
- Construction of a quantitative data set on state education leadership, another aspect of the institutional dimension of governance. Presently, the file contains names and coded positions of all members serving on state boards of education during the years 1983-2002. The current file contains approximately 2,500 records. We are presently extending the data base to the present, and pushing it back to prior years. Further, we will merge these data with an additional data set that captures the names of all individuals who have served as chief state school officers for the years 1975 to the present.
- Construction of a quantitative data set on state education finance that breaks down for each state and year the combination of federal, state, and local contributions to K-12 education since 1975. This captures the financial dimension of governance described in the grant proposal.
- Development of a documentary data base capturing key anecdotes, events, and turning points in state education governance since 1975. Presently, that documentary collection includes approximately 500 items. These sources eventually will contribute to several state-level governance case studies that we are presently developing.

**2.2 Main findings and projected findings.** At this point much analysis is still in progress, but at least a few tentative findings have emerged.

First, our data on the institutional and financial dimensions of governance reveal much variation across the states. The states have organized themselves in a variety of ways to manage K-12 education policy. Developing and publicizing that finding will help to achieve one of the project's primary objectives, which is to raise awareness among other researchers and policymakers about this state-level diversity and to show how it has implications for policy design and implementation.

A second finding, which is more tentative and to be explored more deeply, is that states with relatively centralized governance institutions appear to have somewhat better student outcomes than states with more fragmented systems. Specifically, based on analyses of our governance data and proficiency levels from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for 2003 and 2005, we find that higher student performance is associated with states that allow governors to appoint chief state school officers. However, too much centralization---states where governors can appoint chiefs and state education board members---is associated with lower levels of achievement. We are in the process of exploring that finding using NAEP data from additional years. Plans also exist to examine the relationship between centralization, state policy, and other measures of student success.

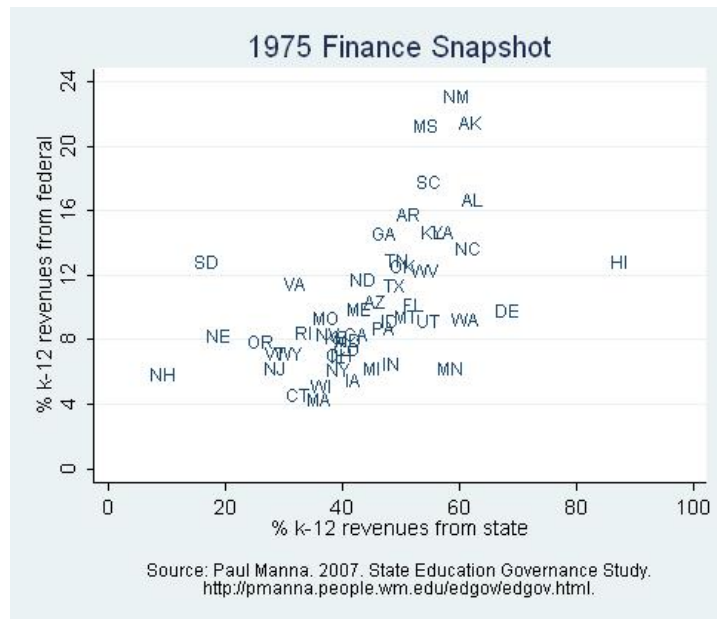
Third, our attempts to identify and gather over-time measures of state policy and student success for all states revealed several challenges. Many organizations---including governments, professional organizations, and research think tanks, among others---are involved in this work, but often the measures these groups gather are hard to use to track long-term changes. Some groups measure particular variables for only a brief period, perhaps five years or less, and then stop. In other instances, these organizations use different coding schemes when they try to account for policy and student success. That makes it challenging to develop consistent measures for long periods of time. Much of our data collection work involved identifying sources that would enable us to develop this long-run view. This finding is worth noting because it underscores the need for the development of consistent, reliable, and easily accessible data reporting systems that will enable researchers and policymakers to better understand the content of state policy and its impacts on student success.

**2.3 Potential audiences and stakeholders.** My assistants and I have already shared some of our work with individuals in the policy world and academia. Already completed and future presentations include these.

- Paul Manna. 2007. Governing K-12 education in the American states: Institutions, money, and results. Departments of Political Science and Public Administration, University at Albany, State University of New York, April 18.
- Paul Manna, Amanda Guthrie, and K.C. Tydgat. 2007. The State Education Governance Study: Concepts, initial results, and future directions. Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO, July 26.

- Paul Manna and K.C. Tydgate. 2008. Gatekeepers to the classroom: The influence of state teacher standards boards on state teacher policy. To be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, January 10-12, New Orleans.
- Paul Manna and Amanda Guthrie. 2008. Leadership continuity and educational performance in the American states. To be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 3-6, Chicago.

The project's website, <http://pmanna.people.wm.edu/edgov/edgov.html>, is also continuing to develop, and it is available to any interested reader. The present site describes the project's activities, the research team, and contains links to earlier pilot studies. Further, we are presently working with staff in the Department of Information Technology at William and Mary to develop several web applets for the site. An applet prototype is complete. Those applets will enable site visitors to see visual displays of the quantitative data we have gathered. The following figure is an example.



This figure shows the degree to which states rely on federal and state sources of revenue for K-12 education in 1975. This figure will eventually appear in an animated web slide show with one snapshot for each year from 1975 to the present. That way, site visitors will be able to see how the relative balance of these revenue sources has changed over time. We have several other animated applets planned, which will show our data and reveal over-time changes in some of the institutional dimensions of governance, in addition to data on the financial dimension of governance that appear here.

**2.4 Data archiving and dissemination steps.** Several data sets discussed in section 2.1 are still being developed. But I have already begun to make data and documents from the project available to others. Those groups include the following.

- National Association of State Boards of Education. We have shared our comprehensive data set of state board members with NASBE staff. (Prior to our work, the group did not

possess such a comprehensive list of its past members.) We have also shared with NASBE staff the electronic versions of their documents that we scanned during our visits to NASBE headquarters. That will enable them to disseminate those documents more easily to their members and other readers.

- Education Commission of the States. During a research trip to ECS we scanned and catalogued approximately 300 documents detailing several dimensions of state education governance. We have shared these documents with ECS staff so they can incorporate them into their digital collections, which they use internally and make available on the Internet.
- New York State Archives, Sates' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project. Located at <http://www.sifepp.nysed.gov/edindex.shtml>, this project houses the Gordon Ambach papers. As a state education chief in New York and then the Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Ambach was a major figure in state education policy from the 1970s to 2001. We are presently compiling and sorting several hundred digital images we captured from the collection. Those images contain quantitative data sources on the states, anecdotal information, and other items pertaining to state education governance. We will make those documents available to SIFEPP project archivists for dissemination on their web site.

Finally, the quantitative data sets described in section 2.1 eventually will appear on the SEGS website for any person to download and analyze. We envision updating those files as more data become available. That will enable the SEGS project to serve as a clearinghouse for several longitudinal measures of state policy, governance characteristics, and student performance for several years into the future.

### **3. Changes in plans**

There are no major changes in plans to report. It is worth noting, though, that the SEGS project was envisioned primarily as an effort to compile quantitative measures of state education governance, policy, and student success from 1975-2005. We have made great progress toward that goal. But, as earlier sections of this report describe, in our research, my assistants and I also discovered several anecdotal sources that we gathered without much additional effort. That fortuitous development will enable our analyses to combine quantitative work with more textured case studies of individual states or particularly interesting past events.

### **4. Publications**

To date, no publications have resulted from the SEGS work. That is essentially because we have spent much time gathering and organizing our data and documents. Presently, two academic conference papers are in the works (see section 2.3), and another previous one will be revised based on new data collected. Those three papers will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals. A longer term objective is to develop a book manuscript based on the research. That will make an important contribution to the literature given that the last book-length study of state education governance was published in the mid-1970s. Editors at the University of Chicago Press and Georgetown University Press have expressed initial interest and encouraged me to contact them when I have prepared a book prospectus.