

## SIIA 2005 Policy Agenda Education & Workforce Development

SIIA supports a long-term, comprehensive national education and workforce development strategy to provide the United States with a citizenry ready for the 21st century. All citizens must have the knowledge and skills to succeed in today's highly competitive and information technology driven global economy. Education and training through and about technology are vital to this effort.

SIIA member companies are partnering with educators at all levels to provide innovative technology-based educational tools, but a successful national strategy requires government to enhance its investment in this challenge. Policy makers should take the following steps:

### Technology Integration & Investment

Public policies must ensure all students have access to technology and the Internet, and that technology applications are integrated into teaching and learning. Technology transforms education practice by empowering students and individualizing learning, and is necessary to ensure students gain 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills.

- **Increase direct investment** in education technology to ensure all students have access to technology-based opportunities, including through software and digital curriculum.
- **Incorporate technology into all education and training programs** to provide flexibility to achieve program goals, including implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).
- **Increase resources for teacher technology training** as a critical component to ensure technology is appropriately and effectively integrated into the curriculum. Critical to the solution is reforming and improving pre-service teacher education.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policies

Technology and the shift to anytime, anywhere, any pace e-learning hold great promise to improve educational opportunity and achievement, but adoption is often impeded by long-standing models and rules. Effective policies must adjust to the dynamic environment, and will neither prejudice nor inappropriately favor technology and web-based education over traditional models and mediums.

- **Seat-time vs. e-Time.** The shift from a fixed-time and institution-based model to learner-based e-learning requires that practices and regulations be updated. Modernization of rules for academic credit, school accreditation and student financial aid is necessary to ensure education is not driven by outdated input measures but by flexible participation and outcome measures.

- **Adoption of Electronic Learning Resources.** Promote the market for high-quality digital tools, content and instruction by reforming prohibitively restrictive regulatory barriers (including textbook adoption rules) and empowering consumers with the flexible resources to meet their educational needs.
- **Accessibility.** Disabled students look to specialized technologies to support their individual needs. SIIA supports balanced public-private partnerships and policies to develop technologies and standards necessary to enhance accessibility, while urging against prescriptive and one-size-fits-all regulations that compromise instructional design and impede innovation and adoption.

## Research & Development

Publishers are devoting considerable resources to develop interactive and engaging software tools and electronic curricular materials. Yet, e-learning stands at a relatively early stage, and greater investment will be necessary to develop and evaluate the most effective tools and models.

- **Publicly-funded R&D** can address gaps in private investment, including underserved niche markets, pre-competitive basic research, product evaluation and large-scale evaluations.
- Well-crafted **public-private partnerships** will ensure the most relevant research is funded, findings impact the consumer market, and government involvement does not inappropriately compete with existing efforts and distort market forces or the incentive for private investment.

## Workforce Development

Encourage and provide resources for students and adults to pursue high-tech training and careers. Promote life-long learning as the key to professional opportunity in today's dynamic economy. The nation's ability to succeed will require government's commitment to ensure all can acquire necessary new skills.

- Target increased resources to improve **math and science education** through technology and teacher recruitment and training, thereby providing students with the ability and interest in high-tech related careers.
- Increase **student aid and scholarship** opportunities for students pursuing high-tech related post-secondary education.
- Look to information technology industry **training tax incentives** as one of several solutions necessary to ensure a well-educated and trained high-tech workforce.
- Invest in **public-private partnerships**, including between industry and educational institutions, to provide training and ensure educational programs meet real-world needs.

## About SIIA

The Software Information & Industry Association (SIIA) is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. SIIA provides global services in government relations, business development, corporate education, and intellectual property protection to more than 600 leading software and electronic information companies. Many SIIA members provide technology products and services to education, while all depend on the nation's schools for a skilled, high-tech workforce. For further information visit <http://www.sii.net>.