

1.1.c College Continuation Rates

Increase the proportion of Nebraska high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education.

One strategic approach to increasing the total number of students who enroll at Nebraska's postsecondary institutions is to increase the state's college continuation rate, or the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who go to college. (A college-continuation rate is sometimes called a college-going rate.)

This section of the *2010 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* focuses on the Commission estimates of Nebraska's college continuation rates using data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education. The Nebraska Department of Education provides the total number of Nebraska high school graduates in any given year. Estimates of the numbers of Nebraskans going onto college at degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions are based on data collected every two years by the NCES through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Using available data from IPEDS, college continuation rates are estimated only for first-time freshmen who go to college within 12 months of high school graduation. Other students go to college for the first time more than a year after they finish high school. However, college continuation rates do not take them into account because the NCES does not require institutions to report when each of the students in this category graduated from high school.

Colleges continuation rates based on IPEDS data also are limited to first-time freshmen who start college in the fall term or preceding summer of the academic year following their graduation from high school. First-time freshmen who wait to start college later in the academic year are not included.

Another limitation of the college continuation rates based on IPEDS data is that they cannot be calculated for any subgroups based on gender, race/ethnicity, household income, or any other demographic or socioeconomic variable. Using IPEDS data, a college continuation rate can be estimated only for the total number of students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during a given school year.

The latest available IPEDS data were reported by institutions for first-time freshmen who started college in fall 2008, providing a basis for estimating the college continuation rate for students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during the 2007–2008 school year. In this section, the estimated college continuation rate for fall 2008 is compared to estimates for previous years, including fall 2002, which is the baseline for this report.

An approach to estimating college continuation rates that overcomes major limitations of using IPEDS data is to use data available from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The NSC is a not-for-profit organization that serves as a central repository of postsecondary student enrollment, degree, and diploma data voluntarily submitted by more than 3,300 colleges and universities. These institutions enroll 96% of the college students in the United States.

Working in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Education, the Coordinating Commission analyzed data obtained from the NSC to estimate the college continuation rates for male and female low-income and non-low-income students who graduated from Nebraska public high schools during the 2007–2008 school year. The findings of this research are

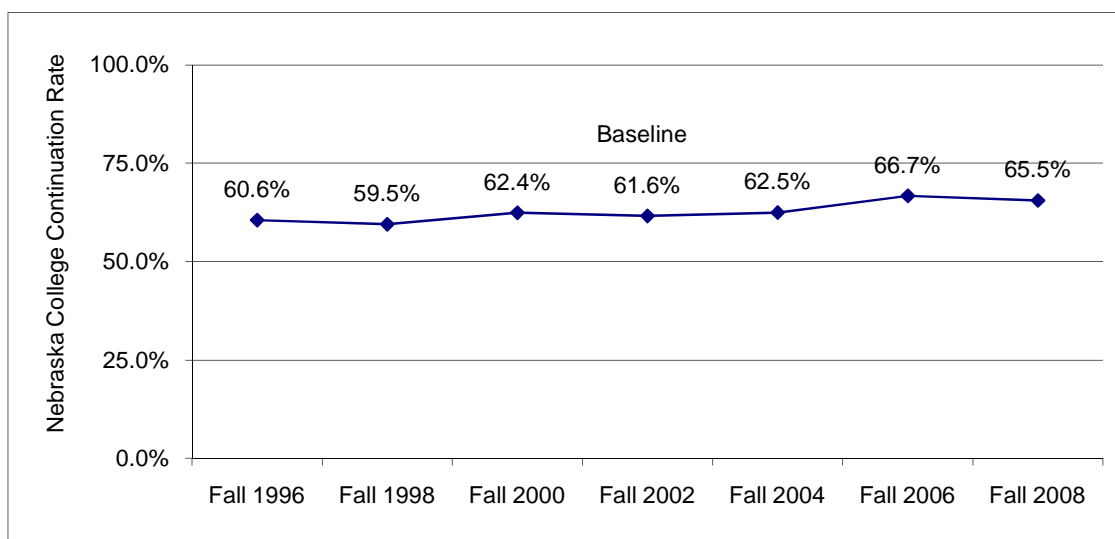
presented at the end of this section as a supplement to the Commission’s estimate of Nebraska’s state-wide college continuation rate for fall 2008 that is based on IPEDS data.

Nebraska Statewide College Continuation Rates Based on IPEDS Data

- Using IPEDS data, the college continuation rate is the number of Nebraska-resident, first time freshmen who graduated from high school within the past 12 months, divided by the number of students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during the previous school year.
- As evidenced in [Figure 1.1.c.1](#), the estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska high school graduates who attended degree-granting institutions anywhere in the United States rose from 61.6% in fall 2002, which is the baseline for this report, to 66.7% in fall 2006. In fall 2008, the rate decreased slightly to 65.5%, a net increase of 3.9% since fall 2002.
- A higher college continuation rate in 2008 resulted in a 9.0% increase in the number of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who attended degree-granting institutions within 12 months of graduating from high school, while there was only a 2.5% increase in the number of Nebraska high school graduates between 2002 and 2008. (See [Table A5.1](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.)

Figure 1.1.c.1

**College Continuation Rate for Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended Degree-Granting Institutions in the United States within 12 Months of High School Graduation
Fall 1996 – Fall 2008¹**

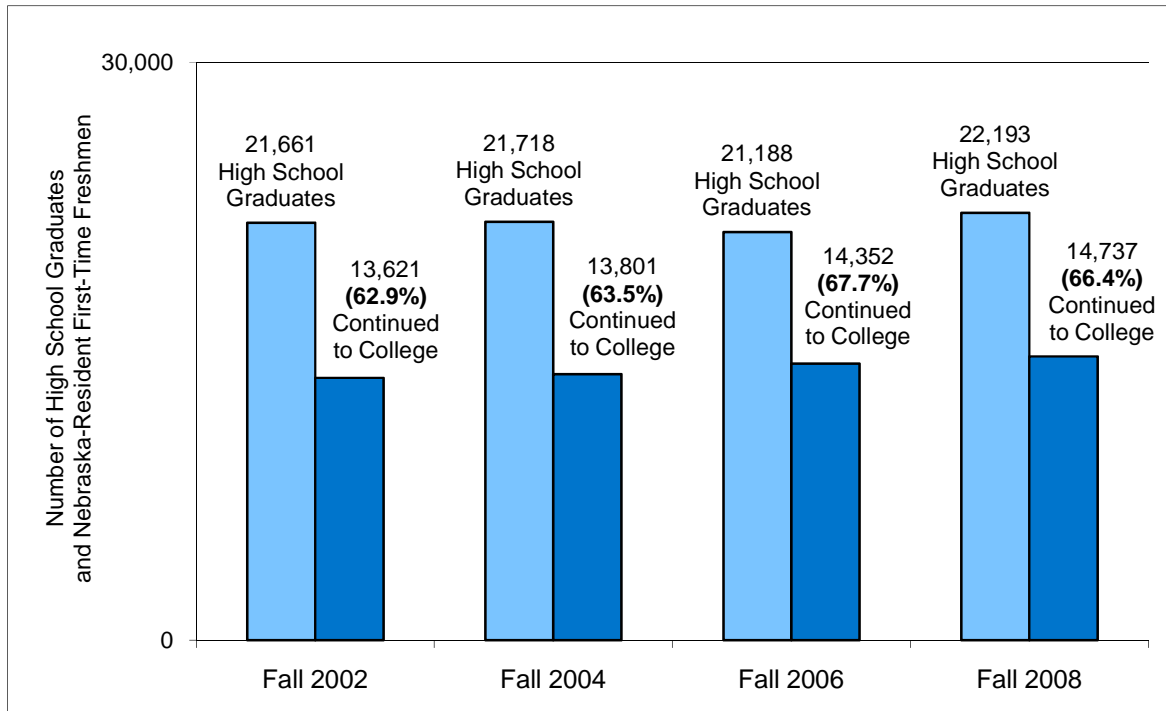


¹Data Sources: Nebraska Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), surveys for fall 1996–2008. See [Table A5.1](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data and a technical note.

- Adding the number of high school graduates who attended non-degree-granting institutions only slightly increases the estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska.
- As illustrated in [Figure 1.1.c.2](#) on the next page, the college continuation rate for Nebraska students who graduated in the high school class of 2008 and attended degree-granting and non-degree granting colleges in fall 2008 was 66.4%, a 3.5% increase from the 62.9% continuation rate in 2002. See [Table A5.1](#) and [Table A5.2](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.

Figure 1.1.c.2

College Continuation Rate for Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended Degree-Granting and Non-Degree-Granting Institutions in the United States within 12 Months of High School Graduation Fall 2004, 2006 and 2008 Compared to Fall 2002¹



¹Data Sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2007 and January 2009, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 surveys. Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A5.2](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data and a technical note.

- The most recent national study of college continuation rates is limited to students who attended degree-granting institutions as first-time freshmen. Based on the state-to-state comparisons reported in the study, Nebraska's college continuation rates have been above the national rates and higher than the rates for many other states.¹

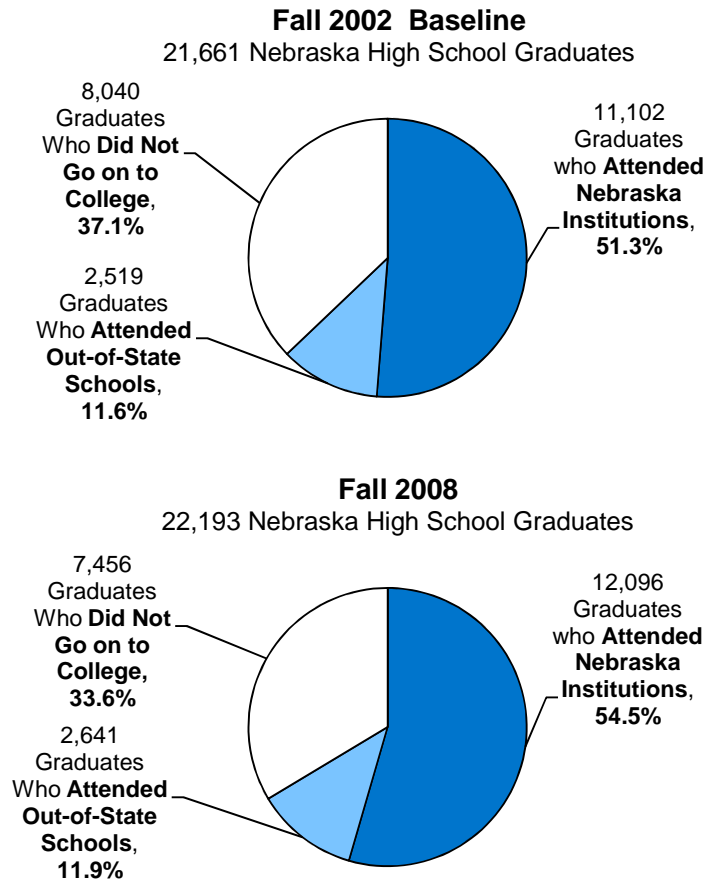
¹Source: Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY, www.postsecondary.org, 2002, 2004 and 2006 College Continuation Rate Comparisons by State included in the Spreadsheet for Chance for College, updated in February 2009. Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), this source calculated that Nebraska's college continuation rate for students attending degree-granting institutions in fall 2006 was 64.5% or the 19th highest in the United States. However, the estimated numbers of high school graduates used in computing Nebraska's college continuation rates for 2002, 2004 and 2006 are higher than the official numbers from the Nebraska Department of Education, resulting in underestimated rates. Since it is not known whether the rates reported for other states are underestimated to the same degree, it is only safe to say that Nebraska's college continuation rates in 2002, 2004 and 2006 were above the corresponding national averages and higher than the rates for many other states. College continuation rates by state are expected to be available in late spring 2010 from Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY.

In-State and Out-of-State College Continuation Rates

- The statewide college continuation rate for Nebraska high school graduates can be partitioned in to two rates:
 - the in-state college continuation rate, which is the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who attend postsecondary institutions in Nebraska within 12 months of high school graduation
 - the out-of-state college continuation rate, which is the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who continue on to college at out-of-state institutions within 12 months of graduating from high school.
- The Commission estimates that the in-state college continuation rate for degree-granting institutions was 53.7% for Nebraska high school graduates in 2007-2008, up from 50.0% of the 2001-2002 high school graduates who attended degree-granting institutions in Nebraska.
- In comparison, the out-of-state college continuation rate increased from 11.6% for the graduating class of 2002 to 11.8% for 2005-2006 Nebraska high school graduates who attended degree-granting institutions in other states.
- As illustrated in Figure 1.1.c.3 on the next page, the Commission estimates that Nebraska's in-state college continuation rate was 54.5% for the state's 2007-2008 high school graduates who attended degree-granting or non-degree-granting colleges, up 3.2% from fall 2002 when 51.3% of Nebraska's 2001-2002 high school graduates enrolled at colleges and universities in Nebraska.
- Over the same period, the out-of-state college continuation rate for both degree-granting and non-degree-granting schools increased only slightly, from 11.6% of the high school graduating class of 2001-2002 to 11.9% of Nebraska high graduates in 2007-2008, an increase of 0.3%.
- The net effect of these increases is that the estimated percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who do not go on to college within 12 months decreased from 37.1% of the high school class of 2001-2002 to 33.6% of the graduates in 2007-2008.
- See Table A5.3 in Appendix 5 for supporting data.

Figure 1.1.c.3

In-State and Out-of-State College Continuation Rates for Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended Degree-Granting and Non-Degree-Granting Institutions and the Percentage Who Did Not Go on to College within 12 Months of High School Graduation Fall 2008 Compared to Fall 2002¹



¹Date Sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2007 for 2001-2002 high school graduates and January 2009 for 2007-2008 graduates, and the National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2002 and fall 2008 IPEDS surveys. Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A5.3](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.

Percentages of Students Who Continue Their Education at Public and Private Institutions

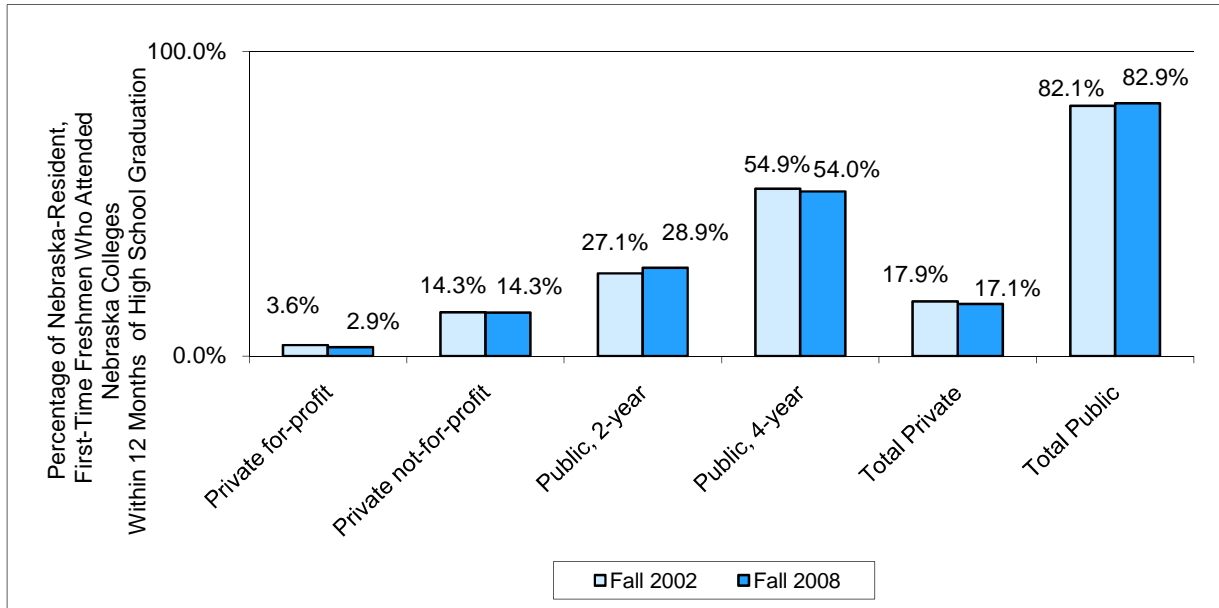
- Of related interest are the types of postsecondary institutions attended by recent graduates of Nebraska's high schools.
- As shown in Parts A and B of [Figure 1.1.c.4](#) on the next page, which is based on IPEDS data, the pattern of attendance of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who go to college in Nebraska within a year of graduating from high school is different from the pattern of Nebraskans who go out of state to school their freshman year.
- Part A of [Figure 1.1.c.4](#) shows that 83% of the first-time freshmen who stay in state attend Nebraska's public colleges or universities, compared to 17% who go to private, for-profit or non-profit institutions within the state.

- In contrast, Part B of [Figure 1.1.c.4](#) reveals that about 57% of the first-time freshmen who go out of state attend public institutions, while 43% go to private institutions.

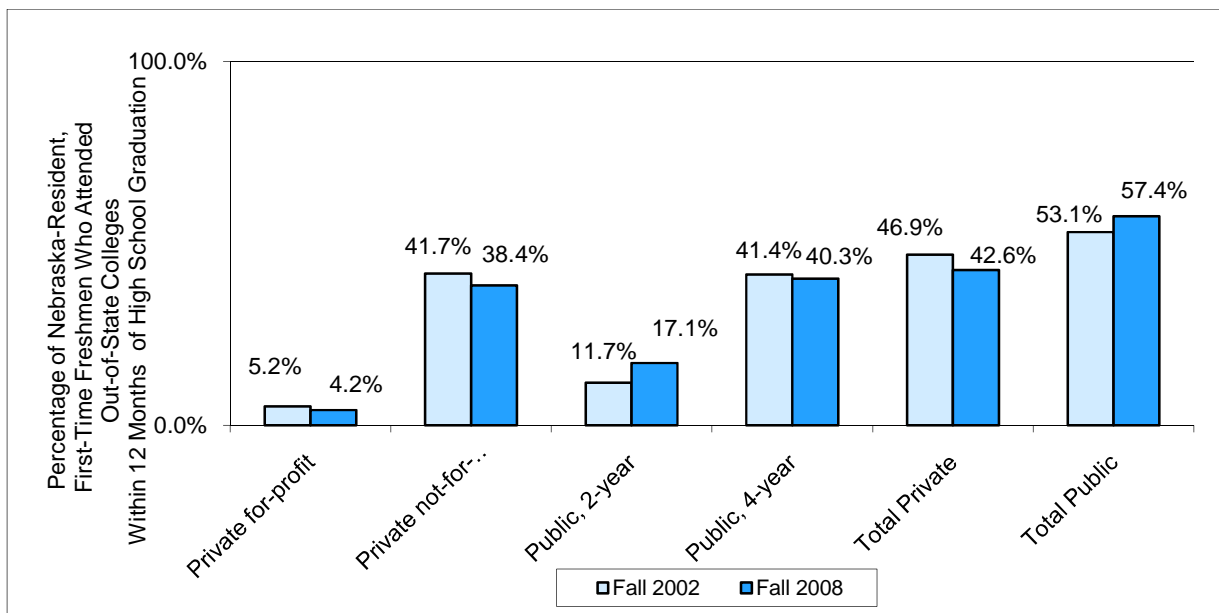
Figure 1.1.c.4

Percentages of First-Time Freshmen with Nebraska Residency Who Attended Nebraska and Out-of-State, Degree-Granting and Non-Degree-Granting Institutions Within 12 Months of High School Graduation Fall 2008 Compared to Fall 2002¹

Part A: Nebraska-Resident Freshmen Who Attended Nebraska Institutions



Part B: Nebraska-Resident Freshmen Who Attended Out-of-State Institutions



¹Date Source: National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2002 and fall 2008 IPEDS surveys. Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A5.4](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.

- The charts on the preceding page also show that a slightly higher percentage of Nebraska-resident first-time freshmen attended Nebraska's public, two-year community colleges in fall 2008 than in fall 2002. This trend is even more evident among the first-time freshmen from Nebraska who attended out-of-state institutions within 12 months of high school graduation.
- As shown in Part B of [Figure 1.1.c.4](#), 17% of the Nebraska-resident first-time freshmen at out-of-state institutions attended public, two-year colleges in fall 2008, compared to about 12% in fall 2002.
- Compared to the public, two-year colleges, the other sectors of in-state and out-of-state institutions attracted the same or lower percentages of first-time freshmen from Nebraska in fall 2008 than they did in fall 2002.

College Continuation Rates for Male and Female Low-Income and Non-Low-Income Nebraska Public High School Graduates Based on National Student Clearinghouse Data

With the assistance of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), the Coordinating Commission used data from the National Student Clearinghouse to estimate the college continuation rates for the students who graduated from Nebraska public high schools during the 2007–2008 school year. These estimates included only “on time” graduates--students who graduated from high school in four years or less. Students who graduated from Nebraska's nonpublic (private) high schools or who required longer than four years to graduate were not included in this research.

College continuation rates were estimated using the records for all public high school graduates in 2007–2008 that are maintained by the NDE and college enrollment records obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse on April 7, 2009.¹ The enrollment records received from the Clearinghouse included 2007–2008 graduates of Nebraska's public high schools who started college in the spring term of the 2008–2009 academic year, as well as the students who enrolled in college in fall 2008 or the preceding summer. However, the Coordinating Commission's analysis of the college enrollment records received from the Clearinghouse indicated that these records did not include a few hundred students who continued on to college in 2008–2009. These students were not included because they attended private, not-for-profit colleges or for-profit colleges and career schools that do not submit enrollment records to the Clearinghouse. As a result of these exclusions, the college continuation rates reported in this section are underestimated to at least some degree.

Using student records from the NDE and the enrollment data from the Clearinghouse, the Coordinating Commission estimated the college continuation rate for all public high school students who earned regular diplomas during the 2007–2008 school year.² In addition, the Commission asked the NDE to determine the number of male and female low-income students

¹Prior to April 7, 2009, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) submitted an electronic file of Nebraska's 2007-2008 public high school graduates to the National Student Clearinghouse. April 7, 2009 is the date on which the NDE received the electronic file of college enrollment records for the 2007-2008 public high school graduates from the Clearinghouse. The NDE then forwarded a copy of these files to the Commission for analysis.

²The Coordinating Commission also estimated the college continuation rates for each of the 284 public high schools in Nebraska that award regular high school diplomas. The report of this research is not available on the Commission's Web site, but a copy can be obtained by calling the Commission office.

in the 2007–2008 graduating class and to determine how many of these students continued on to college, based on enrollment records obtained from the Clearinghouse.¹ Using the counts provided by NDE, the Commission estimated the college continuation rates for male and female low-income and non-low-income students who graduated from public schools in 2007–2008.

Low-income students are defined as students who are approved to receive free or reduced-price school lunches. Non-low-income students are students who are not approved for free or reduced-price school lunches.²

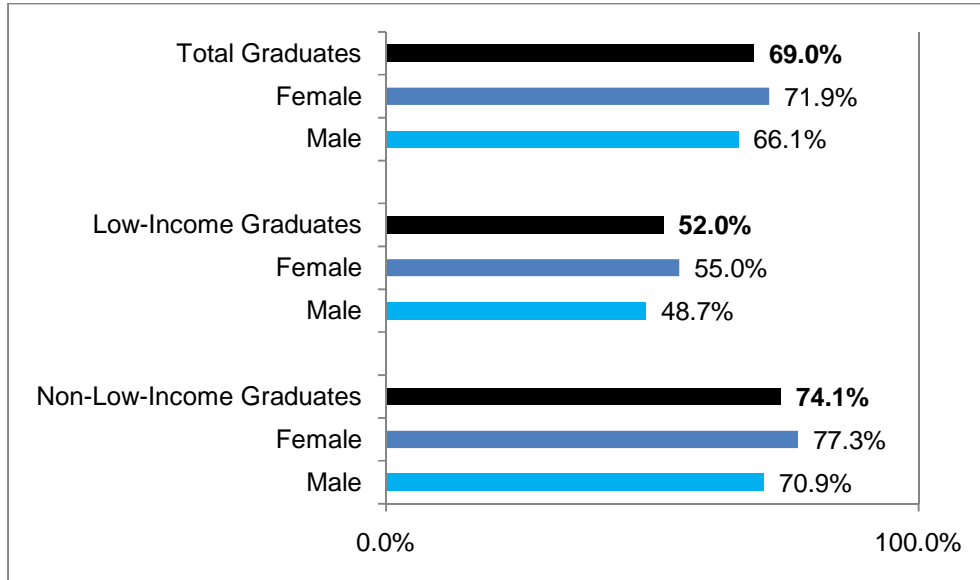
Summary of Findings

- Of the 20,036 students who graduated from Nebraska’s public high schools in 2007–2008, 13,831 enrolled in college sometime prior to April 7, 2009, resulting in a statewide public high school college continuation rate of 69.0% as of April 7, 2009.
- The statewide rate of 69.0% for public high school graduates is higher than the Nebraska statewide college continuation rate of 65.5% based on fall 2008 IPEDS data primarily because students who enrolled in the spring, but not in the fall or preceding summer, are included in National Student Clearinghouse enrollment records.
- Female students accounted for 50.3% of the 2007–2008 public high school graduates, and male students accounted for about an equal proportion of the graduates or 49.7%.
- However, as shown in [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) on the next page, the college continuation rate for female graduates of Nebraska public high schools in 2007–2008 was 71.9%, compared to a 66.1% college continuation rate for male graduates.
- Female students accounted for 52.9% of the low-income graduates and for 49.5% of the non-low-income graduates from Nebraska public high schools in 2007–2008.
- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) on the preceding page, the college continuation rate for female graduates was significantly higher than the rate for male graduates among both the low-income and non-low-income students who graduated in 2007–2008.
 - Among the low-income graduates, 55.0% of the female students continued on to college, compared to 48.7% of the male graduates.
 - Among the non-low-income students, 77.3% of the female graduates went to college, compared to 70.9% of the male graduates.
- As a result of their higher college continuation rates, female graduates accounted for 56.0% of the low-income graduates who continued on to college and 51.6% of the non-low-income graduates who enrolled in postsecondary institutions.

¹The numbers of non-low-income graduates were determined by subtracting the numbers of male and female low-income graduates from the total numbers of graduates provided by the NDE.

²The non-low-income students in this study included at least some students who lived in low-income households but who did not apply for free or reduced-price school lunches. Since participation in the free or reduced-price school lunch program is the only indicant of household income in the student records maintained by the Nebraska Department of Education, low-income students in the non-low-income category could not be identified and excluded for the purposes of analysis.

Figure 1.1.c.5
College Continuation Rates
for 2007-2008 Nebraska Public High School Graduates
by Student Income Status and Gender¹



¹Data Sources: Nebraska Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse enrollment records, April 7, 2009. See [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.

- In comparison, male students accounted for 44.0% of the low-income graduates who went to college and 48.4% of the non-low-income graduates who continued on to college.
- Directly comparing the students in the two income categories clearly shows that the college continuation rate for low-income students was significantly lower than the comparable rate for graduates from non-low-income households, regardless of gender.
- However, the lowest college continuation rate revealed by this study was for male high school graduates from low-income households.
- See [Table A5.5](#) and [Table A5.6](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.

