

Chapter Five

MEETING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

No higher education institution or sector can operate successfully in isolation. To realize its full potential, higher education must extend beyond colleges and universities and forge partnerships with businesses, industries, K/12 schools, government agencies, cultural institutions, communities, and families. Such partnerships offer many benefits to the institutions as well as the State and its citizens.

Major Statewide Goals and Strategies

Goal: Partnerships

Higher education institutions will work as partners with one another and with other entities whenever appropriate to share resources and deliver programs cooperatively to enhance learning opportunities for Nebraska residents.

PARTNERSHIPS AMONG PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Collaboration and partnerships among the State's public postsecondary education institutions will improve efficiency and save taxpayer dollars. Beyond the savings, however, collaboration also offers institutions a means to improve quality and enhance the scope of their offerings through integrating learning opportunities, and sharing of expertise and resources. The result of such partnerships will be a network of institutions with distinct roles and missions and unique areas of excellence that work together to ensure that the State's higher education needs are met.

- **Meet State needs through collaborative ventures and institutional partnerships that produce efficient uses of courses, instructional resources, faculty, and other campus resources.**
 - Opportunities for collaboration, cooperation and sharing of resources are a high priority of higher education administrators.
 - Public institutions are encouraged to enter into cooperative ventures resulting in cost efficiencies to the State, or address local, regional and/or State economic development goals.

- **Through the Nebraska Information Technology Commission (NITC), support and encourage the coordinated and productive use of instructional technologies to expand access to higher education and improve efficiency.**
 - Explore methods to cooperate in the development and use of informational and instructional technology and develop joint plans for addressing current and future educational needs through the use of new technologies.

There are excellent examples within Nebraska of higher education sharing facilities with other institutions, government entities, and communities that yield many benefits to the users. Learning centers in Alliance, LaVista, Norfolk, and Grand Island are examples of differing learning center models that have all yielded successful results for improving efficiencies and meeting needs.

- **When possible, partner with other higher education institutions, communities, businesses, and other entities to share facilities, to improve efficiencies, and to accommodate the needs of students and communities.**

PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS

Nebraska's independent colleges and universities and private career institutions are valuable education resources to the State.

Independent institutions are predominantly liberal arts institutions with distinct characteristics that in some cases attract a national and international student body. Some offer a strong religious affiliation; others offer specialization in certain disciplines. Some independent colleges and universities include a focus on specific populations, for instance, targeting the older, returning college student.

The State's private career schools provide short-term, career-oriented training programs in disciplines such as business, cosmetology, allied-health, trade and/or technical fields, and modeling. Entities that license and regulate the postsecondary education courses offered through these schools include the State Department of Education, the Board of Barber Examiners, the Department of Health, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and the Real Estate Commission.

The positive and competitive environment created by the presence of both public and private institutions within the State is beneficial to the overall quality of postsecondary education. Nebraska will realize the best use of its resources through communication, cooperation, and collaboration among public, independent, and private institutions.

- **Encourage cooperation and partnerships, whenever possible, between public and private higher education to realize the best use of resources and to enhance educational opportunities.**
 - Independent colleges and universities and the private career schools are invited

- to participate in statewide educational planning and coordinating processes.
- The public and private sectors of higher education share an interest in assuring that financially needy students have access to postsecondary education opportunities.
 - Public higher education institutions enter into partnerships with the two tribal colleges in the State to help increase the level of participation and the success of Native Americans in higher education and to provide the tribal colleges and their students with access to needed programs and technologies.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER STATES

The State of Nebraska cannot attempt to provide programs to meet everyone's educational needs. Postsecondary educational services that are not readily available and are expensive to replicate in Nebraska may be available via regional, national, and international consortium linkages. To make maximum use of these collaborative efforts, the institutions and students need heightened awareness of the educational opportunities they present.

- **Participate in regional interstate compacts, including the Midwest Higher Education Commission (MHEC), which will help broaden educational opportunities for Nebraska students and promote resource sharing with institutions in other states.**

By statute, the Board of Regents is authorized to negotiate contracts with accredited schools of optometry and veterinary medicine to provide admission to these programs for qualified Nebraska students. These contracts save Nebraska the expense of offering these programs while providing access to the programs for students through reciprocal agreements.

- **Continue to use reciprocity agreements with other states to provide access for Nebraska students to specific programs that are not otherwise available within the State.**

The Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education has responsibility to determine whether out-of-state institutions will be permitted to offer classes in Nebraska. The Commission's primary concern is the creation of any unnecessary program duplication by allowing out-of-state institutions to operate in the State.

- **Out-of-state institutions cooperate and coordinate with in-state institutions to avoid unnecessary duplication and to focus program offerings to fill existing voids for which the resources of Nebraska are unavailable or of low priority.**
 - The Coordinating Commission considers the availability of instructional programs in Nebraska through existing public and private institutions when making a judgment about whether an out-of-state institution should be authorized to offer programs in Nebraska.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS AND OTHER STATE AGENCIES

An active partnership between higher education and Nebraska's business sector is essential if the economy of the State is to grow. Coalitions formed by a wide range of leaders can help guide institutions to educate and/or train students for the economic and social realities they will encounter. Community-level partnerships may include joint planning, collaborative research, and cooperative education and training programs.

- **Partner with the State's employers to provide ongoing training to employees in both rural and urban locales to sustain the workforce's knowledge, skills, and readiness for change.**
 - The Coordinating Commission and institutions work collaboratively with community-based organizations, one-stop shared agency service centers, and employers to communicate and share information on support and training and/or education opportunities.
 - Higher education, state agencies and employers link data systems to connect education and employment data.
 - The Coordinating Commission, higher education institutions, and Nebraska Workforce Development develop and maintain a data system to track the migration of students between institutions and sectors and from higher education into the Nebraska workforce.

Goal: K/12 Schools

Higher education will work cooperatively with elementary and secondary schools to improve teaching and learning at all levels of education and to facilitate the transition from one level of education to another.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

The ability of students to enter college directly upon graduation from high school and succeed in their studies is the shared responsibility of the K/12 schools, postsecondary education, and the students and their families. The K/12 system must provide the appropriate breadth, depth, and quality of learning for students in the elementary and secondary grades. To help students make smooth transitions from high school to college, colleges must provide appropriate curriculum, course work, and levels of support to students when they reach their institutions.

Responsibility for the quality of learning also is shared by the K/12 schools that hire and retain quality teachers, the postsecondary institutions that prepare teachers initially and upgrade their skills throughout their professional careers; the agency that credentials teachers for Nebraska's schools; and the families, communities, and postsecondary education institutions that shape students' enthusiasm for higher levels of academic achievement. In turn, the State of Nebraska is responsible for providing access to college for those students who are prepared to enter and succeed in Nebraska's colleges.

Cooperative Ventures

Cooperative ventures between K/12 and postsecondary education can be vehicles for improved communication and cooperation on shared issues between the two levels of education.

- **Higher education will support the efforts of the State Department of Education and cooperative ventures to improve communication and cooperation between K/12 districts and schools and Nebraska's public and private postsecondary institutions.**
 - Participate in working groups that have been established at the discipline level so that math and reading/writing teachers at the K/12 district level and college faculty work together to discuss course content to meet both K/12 standards and lead to proper preparation for college freshmen classes.

Prepared Students

Students who are not academically prepared for college-level work are likely to become discouraged or dissatisfied when they enter college and are not successful. A truly coordinated system of education that ensures that students transition easily from one level of education to another begins with an understanding of the abilities of students as they leave one system to enter another.

- **Higher education will collaborate with K/12 to inform all students attending Nebraska's schools, as early as middle-school, what they need to learn and accomplish in order to enter and have the best chance to succeed in Nebraska's colleges.**
 - Work with K/12 educators to clearly communicate to students and their parents, as well as to new teachers and educators, the prerequisite knowledge, skills, competencies, and course work needed for admission to and success in colleges in Nebraska.
 - Increase exposure of K/12 students and their parents to Nebraska's postsecondary education campuses through programs such as College Fairs, career and job placement services for students, campus visitations, and presentations at various student organizations.
 - Provide information that helps families prepare financially for college, including information about college savings plans, federal and State financial aid, and scholarship opportunities.
- **Higher education will collaborate with school districts across the State to identify and address any gaps between K-12 standards for graduation and prerequisite college-preparation for admission to and success in Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions.**
 - Collaborate with school districts in curricula reform to reduce the number of students unprepared to succeed in college-level courses.
 - Provide feedback to the K/12 school system regarding the academic performance and retention of recent high school graduates enrolled in Nebraska's colleges and universities.
 - Work in concert with K/12 to define academic standards for students that clearly connect high school graduation with college preparation, admission and success, and clearly connect the curriculum in the first two years with standards for admission.
 - Review curricula and course work for appropriateness to the level of entering students, the sequence of general and major field course work, and the instruction, learning support and advisement for students in their first two years of postsecondary education.
- **Higher education will collaborate with K/12 districts and schools to assure statewide access to advanced placement and college-level courses for academically prepared students to facilitate a successful transition to postsecondary education course work.**

- Enhance students' access to existing and emerging postsecondary education/high school programs by permitting academically-prepared high school students who are "on track" for high school graduation to be eligible to receive dual high school and college credit for the college-level courses they complete satisfactorily while attending high school.
 - ▶ Encourage and/or enable institutions (e.g., through funding priorities) to use technologies to deliver advanced placement and college-level instruction across the State to academically prepared and eligible students who are admitted to Nebraska's colleges while still attending high school.
 - ▶ Collaborate with the Nebraska Department of Education and the State to align state funding policies and formula for K/12 funding with postsecondary education funding and tuition policies to provide equitable and appropriate tax funding for such programs.
 - ▶ Through dual enrollment guidelines (following this section), establish collaborative minimum standards for dual enrollment programs that (1) assure college level rigor of college credit courses; (2) enrich the high school curriculum; (3) aid students in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education; and (4) foster collaboration between high school and college faculty in curriculum development, instruction, assessment, and evaluation of dual enrollment courses.

- Promote high school students' participation in college-preparation and college-level instruction through programs such as Tech-Prep, School to Career, high school-college academic summer courses and camps, and other such programs.

Nebraska Dual Enrollment Standards

Defining Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment programs are intended to meet the needs of academically advanced students, to provide enrichment for students who have special, academic, or vocational needs, or to provide technical education. Dual enrollment courses will articulate with degree programs at postsecondary institutions. Academic courses will articulate with baccalaureate degree programs or associate degree programs, diplomas, and certificates. Vocational or technical courses will articulate into applied associate degree programs, diplomas, or certificates.

In this document, dual enrollment programs are often referred to as “dual-credit programs” or “programs.” Students enrolled in such programs are referred to as “dual-credit students.” Dual enrollment programs and dual-credit students are distinguished from concurrent enrollment programs and concurrent enrolled students in the following definitions:

Dual-credit students: High school students who take a course for both college and high school credit. High schools count these students in their average daily attendance.

Concurrent enrolled students: High school students who take college courses for college credit only (no high school credit), while remaining enrolled in high school and counted in their school’s average daily attendance.

Standards

The following minimum standards apply specifically to dual enrollment programs developed and maintained by school districts and cooperating colleges and universities.

Students

- 1) Student eligibility for the program is determined by participating high school and college/university officials; however, eligible students will typically:
 - a) Be juniors or seniors; and
 - b) Meet the prerequisites of the course or otherwise demonstrate the ability to achieve success in the course; or
 - c) Be formally identified as high ability or gifted students by the school participating in the dual enrollment program.

Students will complete a dual enrollment application signed by a high school official.

- 2) The college/university has the following recommended academic guidelines to increase students' opportunity for academic success. Eligible students will typically:
 - a) Have attained a GPA of 3.0 or better; or
 - b) Earned an ACT composite score of at least 20 or an equivalent score on another valid assessment; or
 - c) Earned an ACT sub-score of at least 20 or equivalent on another valid assessment relevant to the offered dual enrollment course or courses; or
 - d) Rank in the upper one-half of their high school class; or
 - e) Demonstrate through some alternative means the capacity for academic success in the desired course or courses. (Examples include student portfolios, letters of recommendations, and student performances/exhibitions.)

The preceding student eligibility guidelines may be waived in special circumstances by the appropriate secondary or postsecondary officials.

- 3) Participating students are admitted and registered by the appropriate postsecondary institution with mutual consent of the district and college/university.
- 4) Eligible students are provided appropriate course materials, including policies, college procedures, course outline/syllabus, and assessment materials if not specified in the course outline.
- 5) Eligible students receive guidance regarding their program responsibilities, weighted credit options, if any, and specific grading practices.
- 6) Institutions provide participating students information clearly describing institutional procedures for academic credit transfer. Institutions are encouraged to provide the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education with information or Web site links describing institutional credit transfer policies and procedures so that the Commission can maintain a Nebraska dual enrollment Web site.

Faculty

- 1) Instructors meet approved requirements for teaching at the department/college level. Minimally, instructors for academic courses hold a master's degree. Instructors meet district teaching requirements for program participation. All faculty have the mutual support of the district and college/university participating in the dual enrollment program.
- 2) High school and postsecondary faculty receive appropriate orientation and training (e.g., curriculum, assessment, policies, and procedures) for participation in the program.
- 3) Collaboration between high school and postsecondary faculty is encouraged and faculty development is available where appropriate.

- 4) High school and postsecondary faculty maintain contact throughout the program. In some instances, this contact is facilitated by technology.

The preceding faculty guidelines may be waived in special circumstances by the appropriate secondary and postsecondary officials.

Curriculum

- 1) Courses must reflect college-level experiences and rigor as well as district and state standards and practices.
- 2) Course outlines or syllabi (including at minimum a description of content, teaching strategies, performance measures, grading standards, resource materials, objectives/outcomes, and course calendar) utilized in the program meet district(s), state, and college/university standards.
- 3) Courses in this program are of the highest quality and intended to challenge eligible students while preparing them for transition to postsecondary education.

Assessment

- 1) Assessment policies and procedures are consistent with district and college/university practice.
- 2) To assure the academic rigor of courses for which college credit will be awarded, universities or colleges participating in dual enrollment programs will include valid student and faculty assessment measures that are consistent with the typical assessment measures of such university or college.
- 3) Ideally, curricula should progress logically and neatly with greater complexity and depth as students pass from secondary to postsecondary education. Therefore, jointly developed assessment policies and procedures of K-12 schools and postsecondary education institutions should be designed to align dual enrollment curricula with state course content standards. Additional statewide cooperative work is needed to accomplish this objective.

Evaluation

- 1) The district(s) and college/university review the program on an annual basis.
- 2) Program participants are tracked following graduation through postsecondary experiences when possible. Tracking elements may include district(s) data (e.g., class rank, GPA, ACT where available, AP exam where available and appropriate, and course outcomes and grade) and postsecondary data (e.g., GPA, major, number of hours completed, and enhancements, if appropriate to program).

- 3) Data sharing occurs consistent with the policies of the district(s) and college/university.

Instructional Context and Resources

The instructional context and appropriate resources are determined by district(s) and college/university officials.

School districts and postsecondary education institutions should work together to ensure broad access to dual enrollment courses for all students, irrespective of the students' financial resources. Postsecondary education institutions are encouraged to offer tuition remissions or find other means of support for eligible students qualifying for free or reduced lunches or otherwise demonstrating financial need.

School districts that receive state aid related in part to significant numbers of students challenged by poverty or English language limitations should consider using such aid or finding other means of support to fund the tuition expenses of eligible students who would not otherwise be able to enroll in dual enrollment courses.

All public high schools must comply with the provisions of the Public Elementary and Secondary Student Fee Authorization Act, Sections 79-2,125 to 79-2,135, (RRS). The Act requires that all K-12 education must be free in the public schools. However, students may be charged tuition by the college for college credit. If dual enrollment arrangements between schools and colleges make it impossible or very difficult for a student to take a course as a high school course only and without cost for college tuition, such arrangements might be considered a violation of the Student Fee Authorization Act and Article VII, Section I of the Nebraska Constitution, on which the Act is based.

Teacher Preparation

- **Higher education and K/12 leadership will collaborate in the recruitment, preparation, and retention of quality teachers in Nebraska's schools.**
 - Institutions offering teacher education undertake initiatives
 - ▶ Improve the academic and pedagogical competency of their candidates for certification and assist schools in mentoring new teachers and in the professional development of all teachers.
 - ▶ Develop more integrated approaches to the preparation of teachers in both the Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences.
 - ▶ Equip teacher education graduates with continuing education and professional development opportunities that provide knowledge and skills in utilizing new instructional technologies in the classroom.
 - ▶ Provide graduates with skills and interest in teaching diverse groups of students who are at-risk and in need of remedial/developmental education.
 - ▶ Collaborate with school districts and Education Service Units to improve the availability and the value of in-service training, to mentor new teachers, and to recruit high schools' best students to the teaching profession.
 - ▶ Regularly assess the content and methodology of postsecondary education's teacher and counselor preparation in response to reform in K/12 curricula.
 - ▶ Identify the need for additional pre-service and in-service training in terms of K/12 curricula reform, changing characteristics of students, and changes in college curriculum, teaching, and advising.
 - ▶ Collaborate with the Department of Education to find ways that elementary and secondary schools can improve the productivity of learners and teachers, such as through expanded use of technology.
 - ▶ Work with the K/12 community to address issues related to teacher shortages, including teacher salaries and recruitment programs.
 - ▶ Encourage teachers to promote and encourage their students to consider teaching as a rewarding and meaningful career option.
 - ▶ Assure that all new teacher graduates possess the requisite skills to effectively teach courses using distance learning technologies.

