

A Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska
Section B: Degrees and Awards
Key Findings
September 19, 2006

The principal function of the *Factual Look* is to provide specified higher education data to the Legislature and other interested parties. There are few “surprises” in the degrees and awards data in this latest section of the 2006 report, but the following points are particularly notable.

Total Number of Degrees and Awards Conferred

In 2004-2005, Nebraska’s public and independent colleges and universities¹ conferred 23,488 degrees, certificates, and diplomas.²

Between 1994-1995 and 2004-2005, the total number of earned degrees increased by 27.1%; two-thirds of that growth occurred within the last three years of the ten-year period.

Relative to enrollments, more students are completing degrees

Sector of Nebraska Higher Education	Change in Enrollment, 1995-2005	Change in Degrees Awarded, 1995-2005
Independent colleges and universities ²	Up 30.3%	Up 59%
Nebraska community colleges	Up 28.6%	Up 22.2%
Nebraska State College System	Down 10.7%	Up 22%
University of Nebraska	Down 8.4%	Up 13.8%

Notable Successes

- Except for less-than-four-year degree attainment by Native Americans, minority students’ degree attainment at all levels increased in absolute numbers and in percentages of all degrees earned.
- Between 1995 and 2005, the number of baccalaureate degrees earned by Native American students increased 83.9% (from 31 to 57).
- Between 1995 and 2005, the number of degrees awarded by Bellevue University increased 285.1%.
- From 1995-2005, the number of degrees awarded by Peru State College increased 39.1%.

Notable Successes, continued

- Between 2004 and 2005, Central Community College increased its degrees awarded from 1,201 to 1,651. That increase was primarily the result of a campaign that encouraged students to finish “nearly complete” programs and/or apply for awards for which they were already qualified.

Degrees by Discipline

- When totaled, degrees in business, education, and the health professions accounted for 51.4% of all degrees awarded in 2004-2005. High production in these areas generally parallels national data and matches Nebraska’s projected employment needs.

Points of Concern

- Degree attainment by minority students shows substantial overall improvement between 1995 and 2005, but minority students’ degree completion still lags the white population and is low relative to the number of minorities in the Nebraska population. As our earlier data has shown, this is principally due to lower high school graduation rates for minority students.
- Between 1995 and 2005, the number of Native Americans earning less-than-baccalaureate degrees declined by 40% (from 65 to 39).

¹ Not including for-profit career schools.

² Throughout the remainder of this summary, “degrees” include certificates and diplomas.

Principal data source: United States Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)
Analysis and presentation by Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

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