

2009 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report

Introduction

The *2009 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* is the fifth annual report designed to provide the Nebraska Legislature with comparative statistics to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three key priorities for Nebraska's postsecondary education system. Developed by the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force in 2003, these major goals are incorporated in subdivision (3) of LB 962, now Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1428 (2008), which states:

The Legislature finds that:

- (1) Expansion and diversification of Nebraska's economy are necessary in order to sustain essential public services sponsored or aided by the state;
- (2) Increasing the number of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment is essential to support economic expansion and diversification;
- (3) In order to increase the number of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment, the state's postsecondary education system shall include, but not be limited to, the following key priorities that were identified by the LR 174 Task Force of 2003:
 - (a) Increasing the number of students who enter postsecondary education in Nebraska;
 - (b) Increasing the percentage of students who enroll and successfully complete a degree; and
 - (c) Reducing, eliminating, and then reversing the net out-migration of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment; and
- (4) Unprecedented collaboration and cooperation between and among educational institutions and sectors will be necessary to develop community, regional, and statewide strategies to achieve progress toward these priorities and to assist the state in serving Nebraska students and allowing them to reach their academic caliber.¹

The *2009 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* provides legislators and other state policy makers with a detailed comparative analysis to monitor progress toward the three key priorities listed above. Throughout this report, the most recently available statistics are compared to the quantitative baselines established in the *2004 Baseline Report for the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force*. These comparisons document the extent to which Nebraska's postsecondary education system is making progress toward achieving the key priorities and corresponding strategic objectives recommended by the LR 174 Task Force.

¹Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1429 requires the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to provide, on or before March 15 of each year, a report that evaluates progress toward the achievement of the priorities listed in § 85-1428. The statute requires the Education Committee of the Legislature to review the report at a public hearing and report its findings to the Legislature.

Prior to this report, the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education produced the *2004 Baseline Report for the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force*, the *2005 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report for the LR 75 Legislative Evaluation Task Force* and the *Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* in 2007 and 2008.¹ Copies of the 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2007 reports are available on the Commission's Web site: www.ccpe.state.ne.us.

Five major sectors of higher education in Nebraska are covered in this report—the University of Nebraska; the Nebraska State College System; Nebraska's community colleges; the independent colleges and universities, which are non-profit institutions; and the for-profit/career schools. However, the for-profit schools are excluded from some of the reported analyses due to insufficient or unreliable data pertaining to these institutions.

The Commission always uses the latest data available for analysis. However, for the analyses for the annual progress report, the Commission has to rely primarily on data collected through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education. Data obtained from the NCES are usually not available for six to nine months after they have been collected through IPEDS, and some data are collected only every other year. Consequently, the latest data available for analysis may not be the most current data.

¹The first two reports were submitted in December 2004 and December 2005, respectively. Since the deadline for submission of the third report — the first required by LB 962 — was set for March 15, rather than December of the preceding year, it is labeled as the 2007 report, and there is no report labeled for 2006.