

CONCLUSIONS

In this *2010 Tuition, Fees and Financial Aid Report*, findings for each of the three interrelated areas of affordability, state investment and financial aid identify some areas of concern and suggest that incremental changes are needed. These concerns are especially important considering President Obama's pledge to make sure the U.S. by 2020 has the world's highest percentage of adults holding a postsecondary credential.

Affordability of Higher Education

Affording higher education has become more difficult for students and their families in Nebraska, a situation common throughout the country. The tuition and mandatory fees a full-time resident undergraduate student must pay at a Nebraska public postsecondary institution have shown large increases over the past 10 years. In addition, except for two institutions, students are contributing a higher share of revenue at Nebraska's higher educational institutions. Therefore, families are contributing more of their incomes to the tuition and mandatory fees costs of educating one or more family members, and costs are rising faster than incomes. Nevertheless, those points are less dramatic for most Nebraska institutions than at their peers in other states.

- All of Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions charge less than the 2009-10 average tuition and mandatory fees for a resident, undergraduate student charged by their peers.
- Compared to 2009-10 resident tuition and fees, the percent of 2009-10 non-resident tuition and mandatory fees is considerably less than the peers' average for all but two of Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions (Central Community College and the University of Nebraska at Omaha).
- All but two of Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions (Southeast Community College and the University of Nebraska at Omaha) have student contribution shares in 2009-10 that are less than their peers' average.

State Investment in Higher Education

State investment in higher education is increasingly vulnerable to other state obligations. This past year has been especially challenging due to the economy, leaving students and their families to contribute an increasing share of institutional revenue through tuition and mandatory fees. It is unlikely that Nebraska will be able to increase funding for higher education, due to continuing economic challenges the economy and other state priorities. Therefore, families will likely be contributing larger portions of their income to educate their students in Nebraska, and/or student debt loads will continue to increase.

Comparisons with Peers

- When comparing 2009-10 state appropriations at Nebraska's community colleges to those of their peers, Mid-Plains Community College and Western Nebraska Community College have a higher appropriation per full-time equivalent student when compared the average of their peers.
- The amount of 2009-10 state appropriations per full-time equivalent student at all three state colleges are greater than the average of their peers.
- The amount of 2009-10 state appropriations per full-time equivalent student is significantly higher at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln than their peer averages, while the University of Nebraska at Omaha's is less than the average of its peers.

Financial Aid for Higher Education

Financial aid for higher education has become increasingly important for students and families in Nebraska. While Nebraska has historically been supportive financially of the Nebraska Opportunity Grant, per-student state-provided support for needy students remains low when compared to the rest of the country. And since the state has needed to reduce its contribution over the past two years due to economic conditions, it is highly unlikely that ranking will increase. Because of this fact, student loan borrowing will likely continue to increase in the near future.

Other Financial Aid

- Total tuition waivers awarded at Metropolitan Community College and Western Nebraska Community College in 2009-10 are greater than the average of their peer institutions.
- In 2009-10, Western Nebraska Community College is waiving more than 30 percent of their gross tuition and mandatory fee income. The other five community colleges are waiving less than 20 percent.
- When comparing 2009-10 tuition waivers at Nebraska's state colleges to those of their peers, Chadron State College and Peru State College are less than the averages of their peer institutions, while Wayne State College awarded just slightly more than the average of its peer institutions.
- Total tuition waivers awarded at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 2009-10 are less than the averages of their peer institutions. Tuition waivers awarded at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are greater than the average of UNL's peers.