

INTRODUCTION

Nebraska's statutes require the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to prepare biennially the *Tuition, Fees and Financial Aid Report*. As an important component of the Commission's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*, this report studies the public policy issues relating to tuition, fees, and financial aid for students in Nebraska. It examines the significant, interrelated issues facing the state's students and its institutions of higher education, such as:

- The affordability of attending a public postsecondary institution;
- The state's level of investment in higher education; and
- The trends in financial aid, including Nebraska's state grant and student loan programs.

The appendices of this report offer in-depth information about Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions in relation to their peer groups in:

- State appropriations per full-time equivalent student;
- Student payment share and affordability;
- Tuition, fees and enrollment trends;
- Tuition and fees as compared to inflation;
- Financial aid

Data Caveats

Comparisons with peer institutions allow each of Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions to assess key indicators in relation to data from similar institutions. As discussed in the Commission's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan*, comparisons also provide a method of assessing an institution's progress toward specific goals and outcomes (Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, 2000). This information should also help promote attainment of the major statewide goals in the *Comprehensive Plan*.

A new set of peer institutions for the community colleges was selected in 2014 by the Coordinating Commission in consultation with the presidents of each respective Nebraska community college and are used for the first time in this year's report. New peers have also been selected for the state colleges in consultation with the Nebraska State College system office. However, that process concluded after the majority of this report had already been written. Those peers will be reflected for the first time in the 2016 report. Additionally, a new set of peers will be selected for the University of Nebraska campuses in time for the 2016 report.

In gathering data for this report, information on the peer institutions for the 2003-04 through 2012-13 academic years was obtained from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a database of educational statistics maintained by the U.S. Department of Education. To obtain data for the 2013-14 academic year a survey was sent to all Nebraska institutions and their peers, except for Nebraska's community colleges whose data was obtained from the Nebraska supplemental budget reports.

Not all colleges returned their survey; therefore, the Coordinating Commission looked at the average year-to-year change from 2004-05 through 2012-13 and estimated the amount for 2013-14. These figures will be updated to actual information in the 2016 report.