

Executive Summary

This report provides the Nebraska Legislature with comparative statistics to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving **three key priorities** for Nebraska's postsecondary education system:

- **Increase the number of students who enter postsecondary education in Nebraska.**
- **Increase the percentage of students who persist and successfully complete a degree.**
- **Reduce, eliminate, and then reverse the net out-migration of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment.**

These priorities were developed by the 2003 LR 174 Higher Education Task Force and are incorporated in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1428 (3).

This summary highlights the comparative analysis used to measure and evaluate performance with respect to each priority. Throughout this analysis, the latest available statistics are compared to the quantitative baselines established in 2004 for the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force. The complete report and its appendices, which are online at www.ccpe.ne.gov, provide a detailed and fully documented analysis.

Overall Progress and Challenges Facing the State

- The research findings in the *2015 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* reflect modest annual changes in the state's postsecondary education system.
- **While the changes measured each year have been relatively small, progress through 2010 was generally in the right direction with respect to the first and second priorities recommended in 2003. However, for the past four years, enrollments have declined.**
- Estimates of net-migration—priority three—do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude whether Nebraska is gaining or losing more working-age adults with college degrees.
- Even though progress toward most of the state's higher-education goals is generally in the right direction, it is not aggressive enough to meet the state's long-term needs and goals.
 - Since 2002–2003, the number of students graduating from Nebraska's high schools has increased 4.7%. The cohort four-year graduation rate has increased from 86% in 2010–2011 to 90% in 2013–2014. However, many students continue to drop out of high school before they earn diplomas, lessening their likelihood of financial and other successes and, for the purposes of this report, reducing the pool of students who could go to college.
 - The college-going rate of Nebraska public and private high school students is among the top 10 nationally (as of fall 2010), but it has not increased significantly for graduates of Nebraska's public high schools since the Commission began estimating college continuation rates in 2007–2008.
 - Overall freshmen retention rates have declined slightly since 2004 while the state's overall college graduation rates has risen only slightly since 2004. College graduation rates are significantly lower for Hispanics, blacks, Native Americans, and multiracial students than for white and Asian undergraduate students.
 - Nebraska has increased the amount of state funds allocated for need-based financial aid, but state funding has not kept pace with the number of students who are eligible for state grants. The Nebraska Opportunity Grant program has aided thousands of students, but more state-funded, need-based aid is needed to enable more of the state's low-income and moderately low-income students to go to college and earn degrees.

Priority 1

Increase the number of students who enter postsecondary education in Nebraska

Decreasing enrollments are one of the most significant trends evidenced in this report on higher education in Nebraska. Since 2010, Nebraska's total fall enrollment has decreased an estimated 6.5% to 136,355. Meanwhile, first-time freshmen (FTF) enrollment decreased to 18,769, a 4.5% decline since 2010.

enrollment across the United States increased 22.5% over this same period.

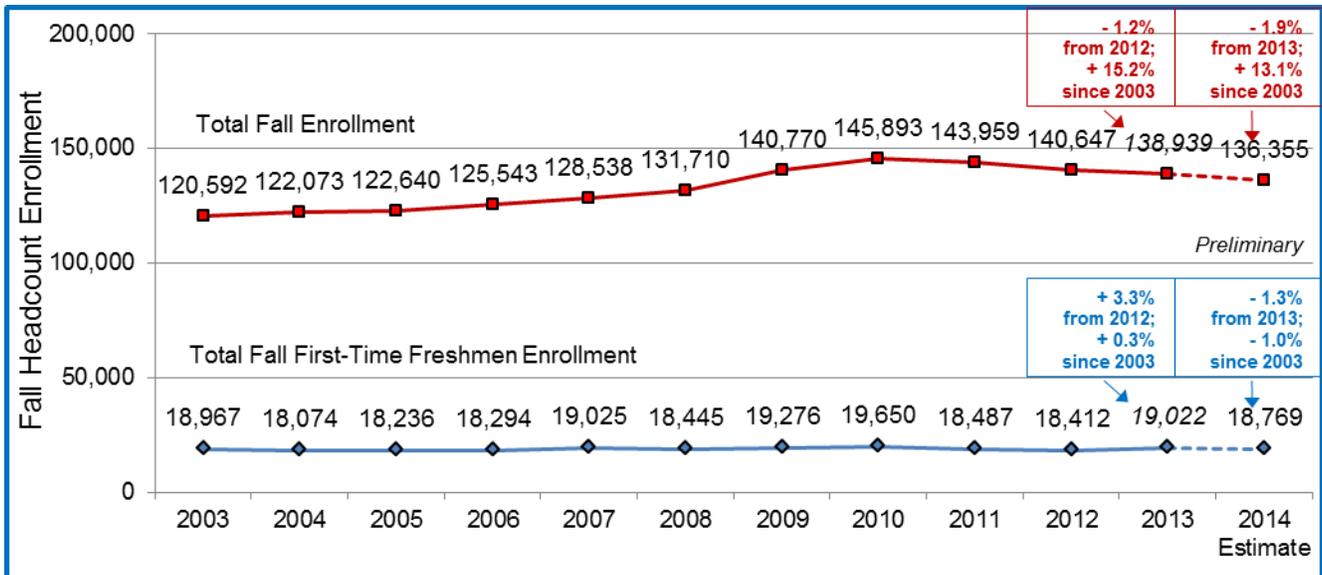
It is estimated that fall 2014 statewide enrollment decreased 1.9% since 2013, resulting in an 11-year increase of 13.1% since baseline in fall 2003.

Total fall enrollments

Nebraska's total postsecondary headcount enrollment increased steadily from 120,592 in fall 2003 to a high of 145,893 in fall 2010, an increase of 21.0%. However, fall enrollment decreased to 138,939 in fall 2013, for an overall 10-year increase of 15.2%. In comparison, fall

As shown in the charts on the next page, total fall enrollment increased across all sectors between 2003 and 2013, ranging from an increase of 6.1% at the community colleges to an increase of 39.4% at the independent institutions. However, based on preliminary estimates, 2014 fall enrollments were lower than fall 2003 enrollments at Nebraska's community colleges and for-profit/career/schools.

Fall Total Headcount Enrollment and First-Time Freshmen Enrollment: Fall 2003 – Fall 2014



Note. See Figure 1.1 (page 3) and Figure 1.14 (page 16).

Freshmen fall enrollments

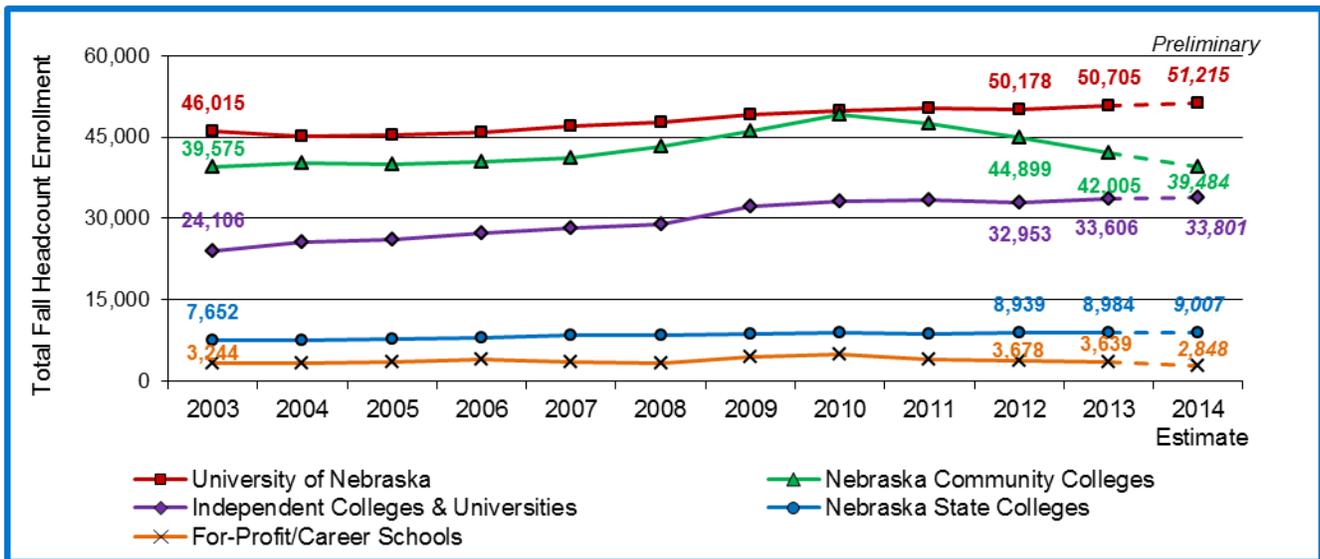
Total enrollment of first-time freshmen (FTF) at the state's postsecondary institutions increased 0.3%, from 18,967 in fall 2003 to 19,022 in fall 2013. At the same time, national FTF enrollments increased 12.8%.

It is estimated that fall 2014 statewide FTF enrollment decreased by 1.3% since 2013,

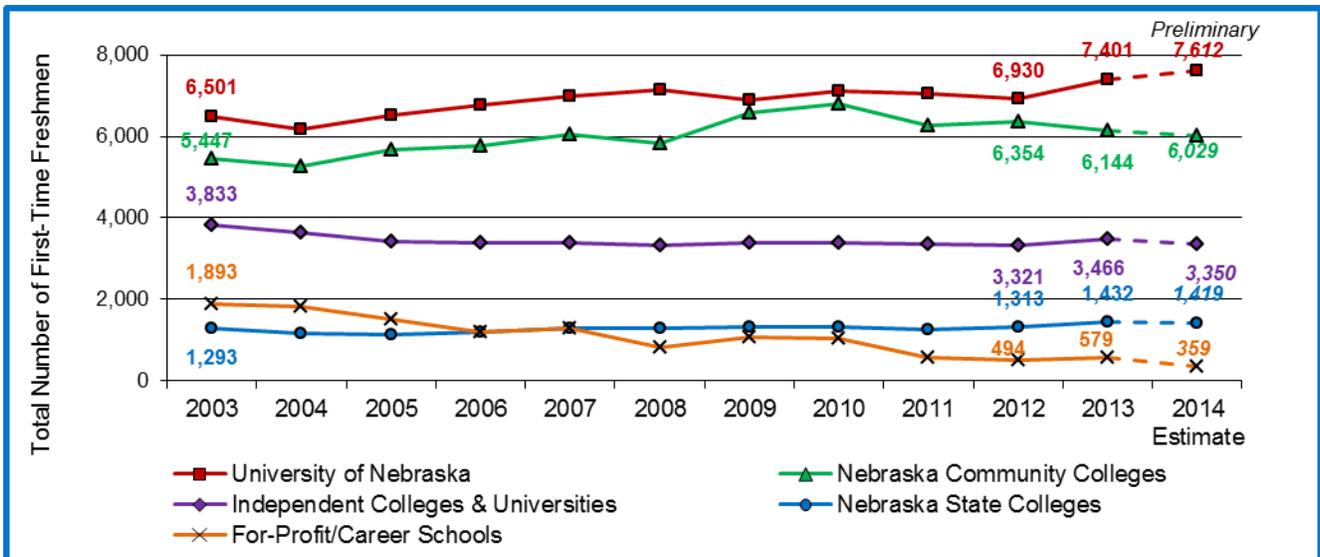
resulting in an 11-year decrease of 1.0% since baseline.

Between fall 2003 and fall 2014, FTF enrollment decreased an estimated 12.6% at the independent institutions and 81.0% at the for-profit sector. However, FTF enrollment increased 17.1% at the University of Nebraska, 9.7% at the Nebraska State College System, and 10.7% at the community colleges.

Fall Total Headcount Enrollment by Sector: Fall 2003 – Fall 2014



First-Time Freshmen Enrollment by Sector: Fall 2003 – Fall 2014



Note. See Figure 1.2 (page 4) and Figure 1.17 (page 19).

Nebraska high schools—Nebraska’s primary source of college students

The number of students who graduate from Nebraska high schools is important information because more than 83% of the first-time freshmen at Nebraska’s colleges and universities are graduates of Nebraska high schools.¹

Since 2002–2003, the number of students graduating annually from Nebraska high schools has increased 4.7%, from 21,972 to 23,004 in 2013–2014.

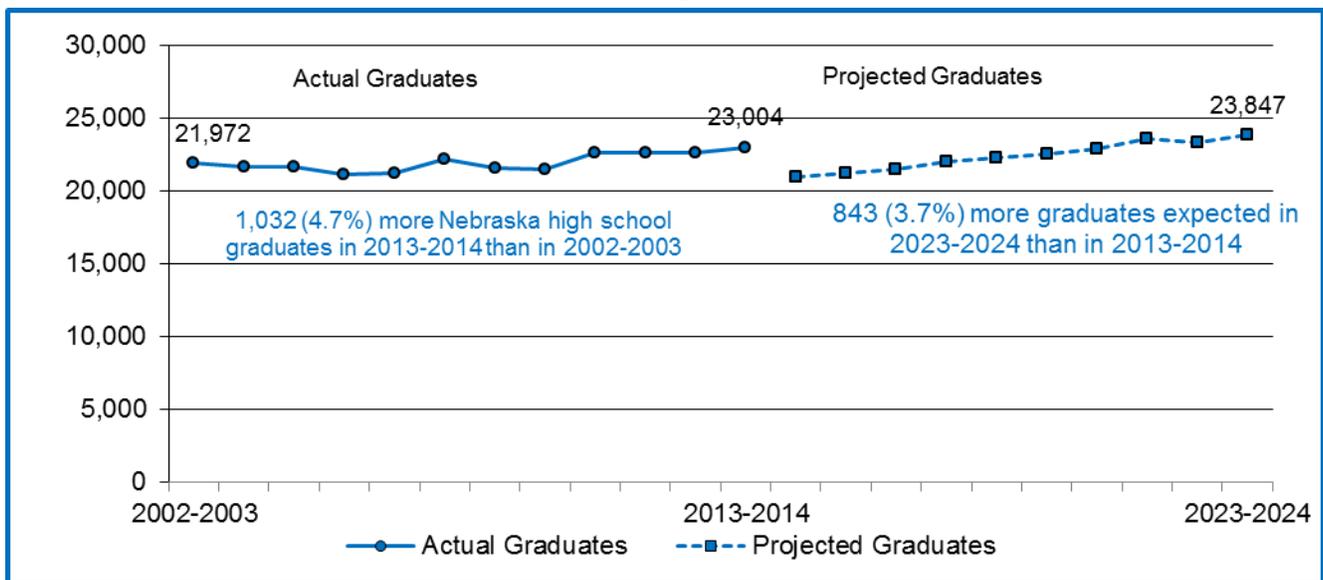
Based on the latest projections, Nebraska high schools will graduate about 843 more students in 2022–2023 than in 2013–2014, an increase of 3.7%.

Shifting high school demographics

The demographic profile of Nebraska’s high school graduates is forecast to continue to change over the next decade.

Even though Hispanic students graduate from high school at a lower *rate* than white non-Hispanics and Asians, they are projected to account for 18.2% of Nebraska’s public high school graduates by 2023–2024, compared to 14.3% in 2013–2014. Additionally, other minorities are projected to account for 11.8% of Nebraska’s public high school graduates by 2023–2024, compared to 12.2% in 2013–2014.

**Actual and Projected Number of Nebraska High School Graduates
2002–2003 through 2023–2024**

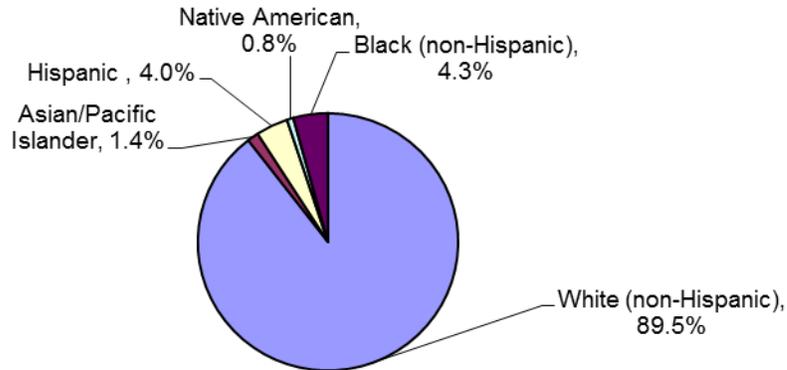


Note. See Figure 1.1.a.1 (page 23) and Figure 1.1.a.2 (page 25).

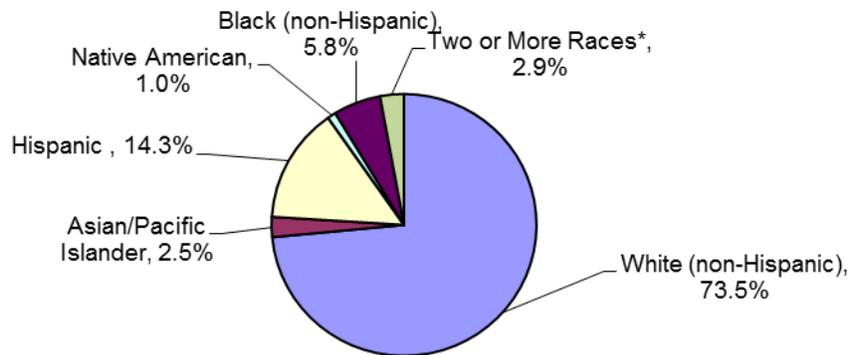
¹This conclusion refers to the first-time freshmen who enroll in college within one year of graduating from high school. These students account for about 83% of all first-time freshmen. The remaining 17% enroll more than a year after high school graduation, and where they graduate from high school is not reported.

Actual and Projected Percentages of Nebraska Public High School Graduates

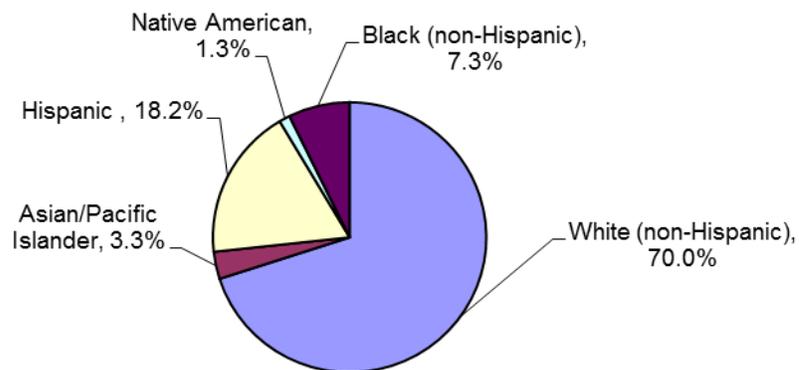
Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2002–2003 Baseline



Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2013–2014



Projected Percentages of Graduates: 2023–2024



Note. See Figure 1.1.a.3 (page 26).

High school graduation rates

The graduation rates at Nebraska's public high schools improved for all of the major racial and ethnic groups between 2002–2003 and 2009–2010.

In 2010–2011, the cohort four-year graduation rate replaced the methodology used previously to calculate graduation rates and established a new baseline for future comparisons. Based on this new methodology, Nebraska's public high school graduation rate was 90% in 2013–2014, up from 86% three years earlier in 2010–2011. In fact, in 2012–2013 (the latest year for which national data is available), Nebraska's cohort four-year graduation rate was ranked second highest in the nation. (See Figure 1.1.a.5 on page 29.)

Using the new methodology, males continue to graduate at lower rates than females. In 2010–2011, the graduation rate for females was 89%, compared to 83% for males. By 2013–2014, the graduation rate for males increased to 87%, compared to 92% for their female classmates (See Figure 1.1.a.6 on page 30.)

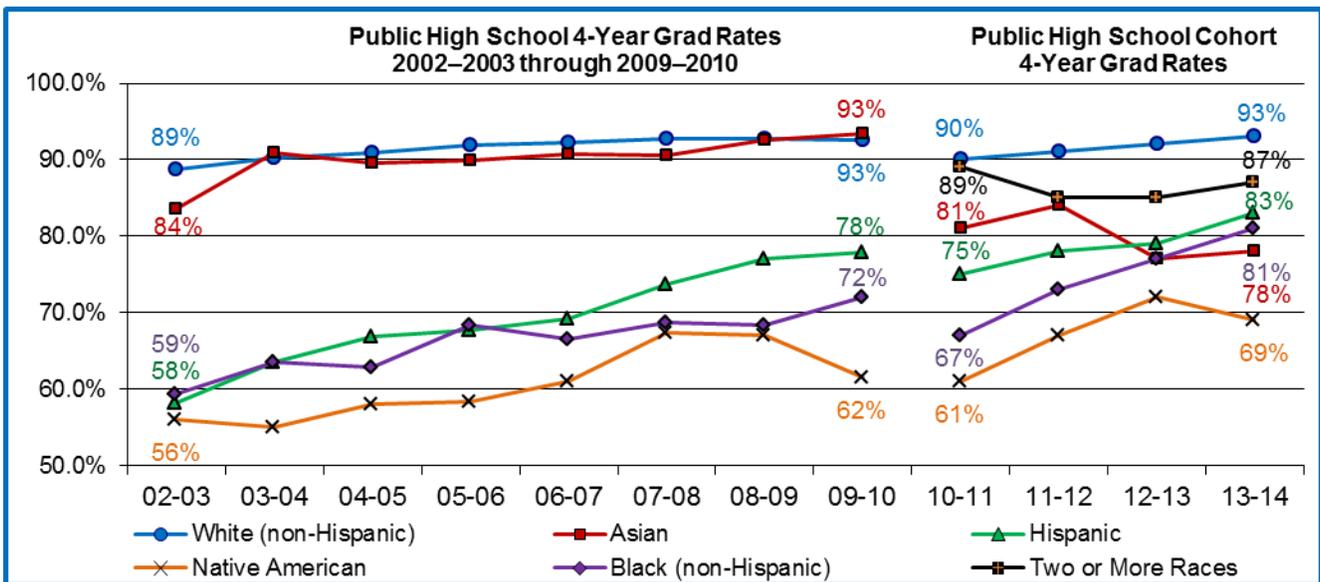
As shown below, between 2010–2011 and 2013–2014, cohort four-year graduation rates

decreased three percentage points for Asians and two percentage points for multi-racial individuals. During this same time, cohort four-year graduation rates increased for all other racial/ethnic groups, ranging from a three percentage point increase for white non-Hispanics to a 14 percentage point increase for black non-Hispanics.

An important addition to the 2015 Progress Report is the reporting of cohort extended graduation rates. Extending graduation rates out to six years increases the overall public high school graduation rates by three to four percentage points. (See Figure 1.1.a.8 on page 34.)

While Nebraska's overall public high school graduation rate has been increasing, analysis of the total membership and the total number of dropouts from the 7th through 12th grades reveals that compared to their white classmates, all other racial/ethnic groups accounted for disproportionately higher percentages of the students who dropped out of school relative to the percentages of students included in fall membership counts in 2013–2014. (See Table 1.1.a.3 on page 36.) Consequently, Nebraska needs to continue to strengthen efforts to reduce and eliminate these disparities.

**Nebraska Public High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity
2002–2003 through 2013–2014**



Note. See Figure 1.1.a.7 (page 31).

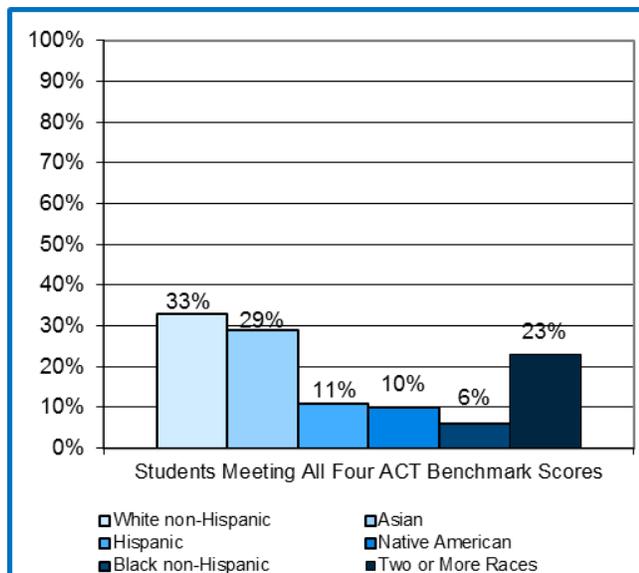
Preparation for college

The average ACT® composite score for Nebraska high school students was 21.7 in 2014, the same as Nebraska's average composite score in 2004 (the baseline for this report). Nebraska's 2014 ACT composite score is higher than the 2014 national average of 21.0. (See Figure 1.1.b.3 on page 41.)

Data from ACT, Inc. for the class of 2014 suggest that only 29% of Nebraska's ACT-tested high school graduates are sufficiently prepared to succeed in all four common areas of entry-level college coursework: algebra, biology, English, and social science. (See Figure 1.1.b.5 on page 44.)

Furthermore, as shown below, compared to their white non-Hispanic and Asian classmates, even lower percentages of the state's Hispanic, Native American, black non-Hispanic, and multiracial high school graduates are adequately prepared for entry-level college coursework.

Percentages of 2014 ACT-Tested Nebraska High School Students Who Met or Exceeded ACT College Readiness Scores by Race/Ethnicity



Note. See Figure 1.1.b.7 (page 46).

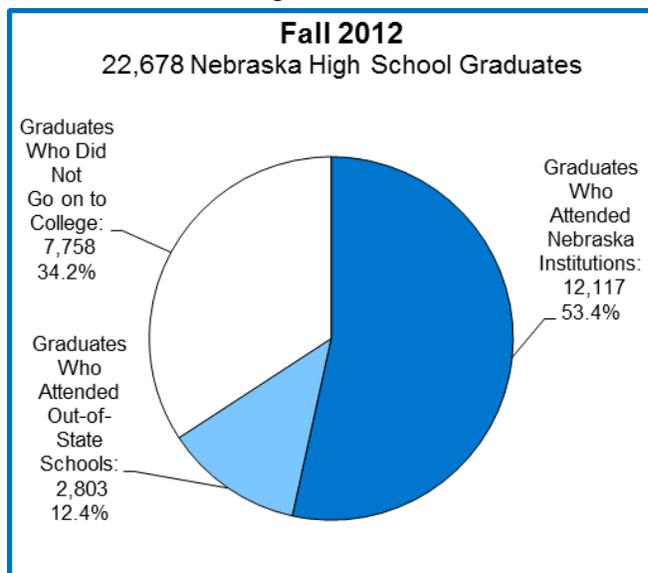
College continuation rates: using IPEDS data

The most common approach to estimating college continuation rates uses data collected every two years through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The advantage of this approach is that, every other year, Nebraska's college-going rate can be compared directly to the rates of other states.

The latest available national college continuation rate data shows that Nebraska ranked seventh nationally in fall 2010 with a college continuation rate of 69.5% (compared to 62.5% nationally). (See Figure 1.1.c.3 on page 57.)

For Nebraska, the latest available IPEDS data are for the high school graduation class of 2011–2012 who continued to college in fall 2012. Of the 22,678 students who graduated from high school in 2011–2012, 34.2% did not go on to college in fall 2012, while 53.4% went to college in Nebraska and 12.4% went out of state to further their education.

Percentages of 2011–2012 Nebraska High School Graduates by Whether and Where They Went to College in Fall 2012



Note. See Figure 1.1.c.4 (page 59).

Based on the latest available IPEDS data, a total of 65.8% of Nebraska's high school graduates from the class of 2011–2012 enrolled in college in fall 2012, an increase of 2.3 percentage points from the 63.5% continuation rate in 2002.

Enrollment of out-of-state and foreign students

In addition to attracting a high percentage of the state's college-going high school graduates, Nebraska colleges enrolled 3,609 out-of-state and foreign first-time freshmen in fall 2012. (See Figure 1.3.1 on page 75.) Additionally, at degree-granting institutions, the state imported 184 more first-time freshmen than it exported. (See Figure 1.3.3 on pages 79-80.)

Public high school college continuation rates based on National Student Clearinghouse data

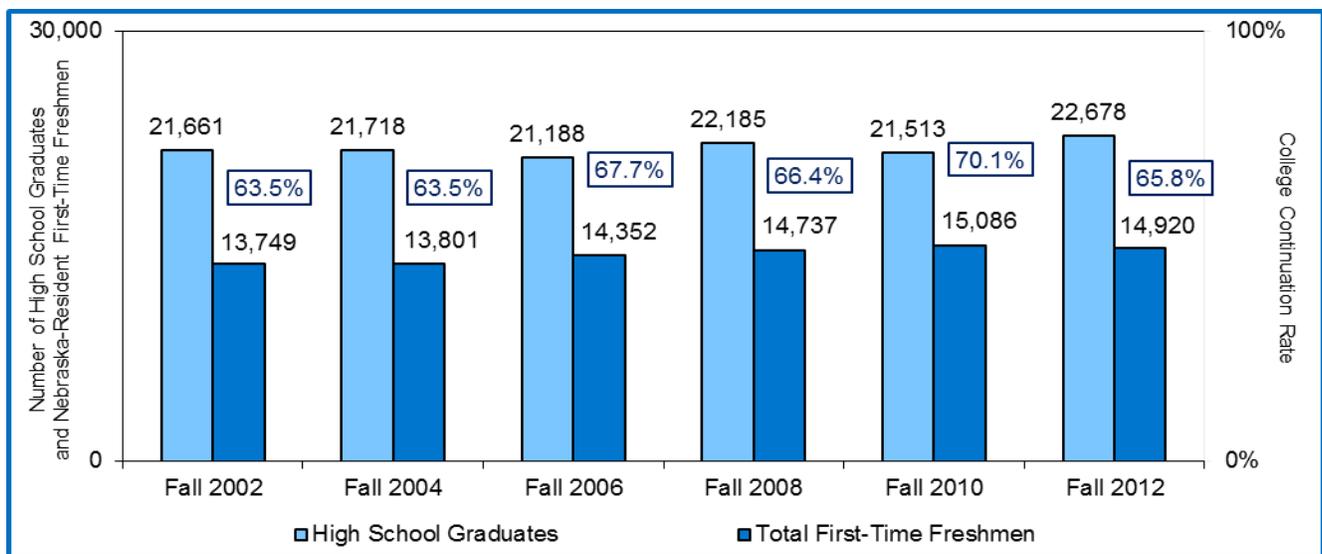
An alternative approach to calculating Nebraska's college-going rate is to annually use data obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) in cooperation with the

Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). An advantage of this approach is that college-going rates can be calculated every year and compared by student income level.

Using data files from the NDE matched with college enrollment files from the Clearinghouse, the Commission has conducted research to estimate the college-going rates of Nebraska's public high school graduates in 2007–2008, through 2012–2013.¹

As the charts on the next page illustrate, the college continuation rates for low-income graduates of Nebraska's public high schools are significantly lower than the comparable rate for graduates from non-low income households, regardless of gender. However, female public high school graduates have consistently higher college-going rates than their male classmates, and the lowest college-going rates are for male public high school graduates from low-income households.

Nebraska College Continuation Rates Based on IPEDS Data



Note. See Figure 1.1.c.2 (page 56).

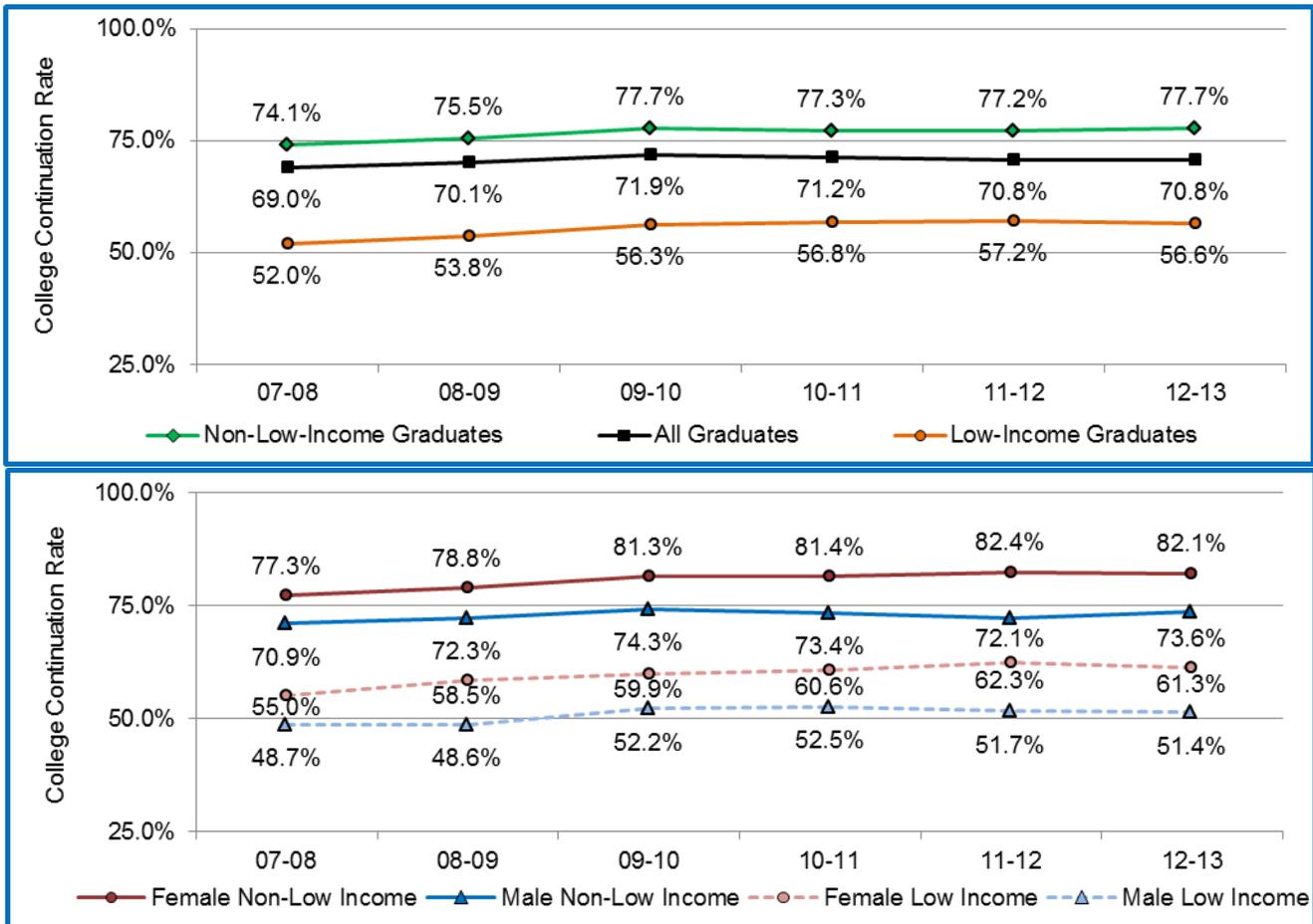
¹College continuation rates based on NSC data files are not comparable to statewide rates based on IPEDS data for two reasons. First, available NDE data files do not include graduates of Nebraska's private (non-public) high schools. Second, NSC data files include students who first enrolled in college in the winter or spring, as well as those who started college in the fall or the preceding summer. As a result, the college-going rates based on NDE and NSC data files will be higher than those calculated using IPEDS data, even though they do not include graduates of the state's private high schools. ²Low-income students are defined as students who are approved to receive free or reduced-price school lunches. Non-low-income students are students who are not approved for free or reduced-price school lunches. This group may include some low-income students who do not sign up for free or reduced-price school lunches.

National estimates of college continuation rates for high school graduates

Data from the NDE matched with the Clearinghouse shows that overall, 70.8% of 2012–2013 Nebraska public high school graduates continued onto college. 74.9% of female graduates continued on to college, compared to 66.6% of their male classmates.

Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates the national college continuation rate for January–October 2013 high school graduates to be 65.9%. Mirroring a similar gender gap as is seen in Nebraska, national estimates show that females are more likely than males to continue on to college—63.5% for males versus 68.4% for females. (See Figure 1.1.c.10 on page 66.)

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates Based on National Student Clearinghouse Data



Note. See Figure 1.1.c.7 (page 63) and Figure 1.1.c.9 (page 65).

Trends in first-time freshmen enrollments

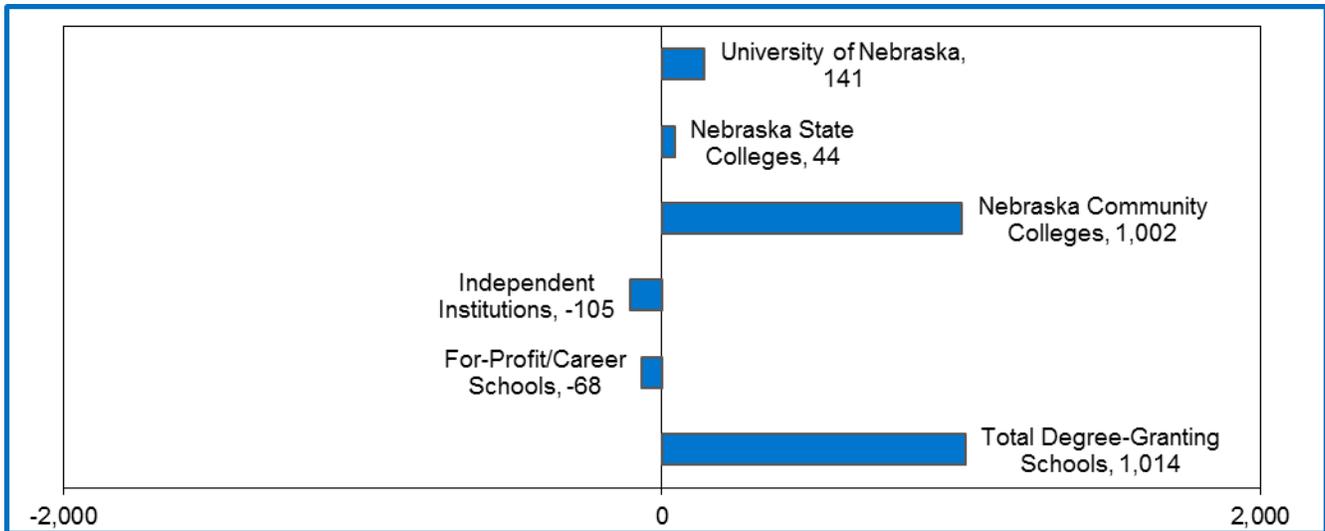
Using IPEDS data collected every other year, the Commission monitors the enrollment of first-time freshmen who are residents of Nebraska, classified by whether they start college within 12 months of high school graduation or wait to enroll in college more than 12 months after they graduate from high school.

The Commission's latest analysis reveals that the

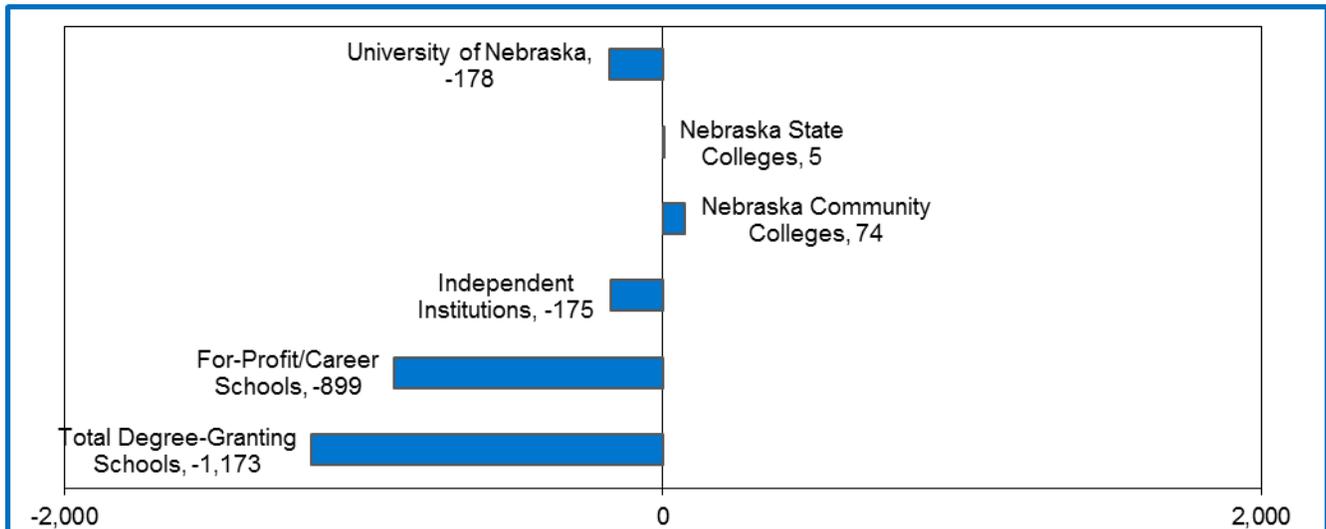
number of first-time freshmen (FTF) who enrolled at Nebraska's community colleges *within a year of high school graduation* increased by 1,002 students, or 34.3%, between fall 2002 and fall 2012.

Analysis also reveals that the number of FTF who started college *more than a year after high school graduation* decreased between fall 2002 and fall 2012 within all sectors, except Nebraska state colleges and the community colleges.

Changes in the Numbers of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Enrolled at Nebraska Degree-Granting Institutions within 12 Months of High School Graduation Fall 2012 Compared to Fall 2002



Changes in the Numbers of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Enrolled at Nebraska Degree-Granting Institutions More than 12 Months After High School Graduation Fall 2012 Compared to Fall 2002



Note. See Figure 1.2.2 (page 72) and Figure 1.2.4 (page 74).

First-time freshmen enrollments by race/ethnicity

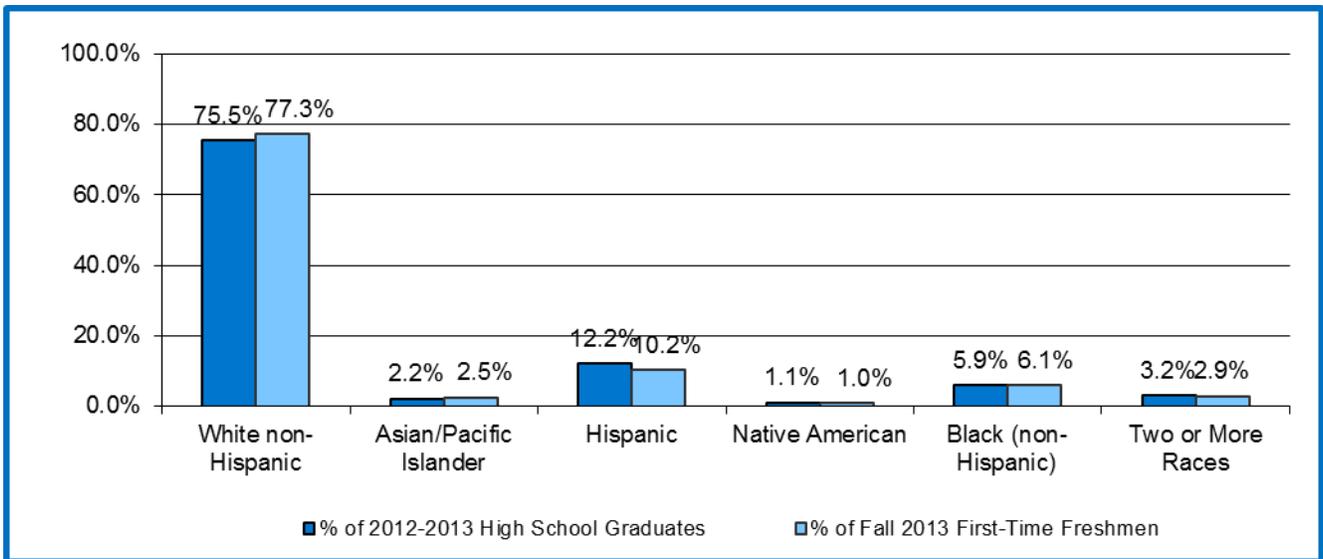
Based on IPEDS data collected annually, higher numbers of Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, Native Americans and black non-Hispanics were enrolled at Nebraska institutions in fall 2013 than in fall 2003. Over the same period, there was a predictable decrease in the number of white first-time freshmen, given the decrease in the number of white non-Hispanics graduated from Nebraska's high schools in 2012–2013 compared to 2002–2003. (See Figure 1.4.1 and Figure 1.4.2 on page 82.)

As previously discussed, disproportionately lower percentages of Asians/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, Native Americans, and black non-Hispanics graduate from Nebraska high schools compared to white non-Hispanic students and students of two or more races.

However, as shown in the chart below, *minority students who graduate from high school generally tend to be represented among first-time college freshmen in Nebraska to about the same relative degree as white-non Hispanics, except for Hispanics, Native Americans, and multiracial students who were slightly underrepresented among FTF in fall 2013.*

There were 2,068 more minority students attending Nebraska colleges as first-time freshmen in fall 2013 than in fall 2003, an increase of 103.1%. In comparison, there were 1,954 fewer white non-Hispanic first-time freshmen in fall 2013 than in fall 2003, a decrease of 12.4%.

Percentages of 2012-2013 Nebraska High School Graduates and First-Time Freshmen Enrolled at Nebraska Colleges and Universities in Fall 2013 by Race/Ethnicity



Note. See Figure 1.4.3 (page 83).

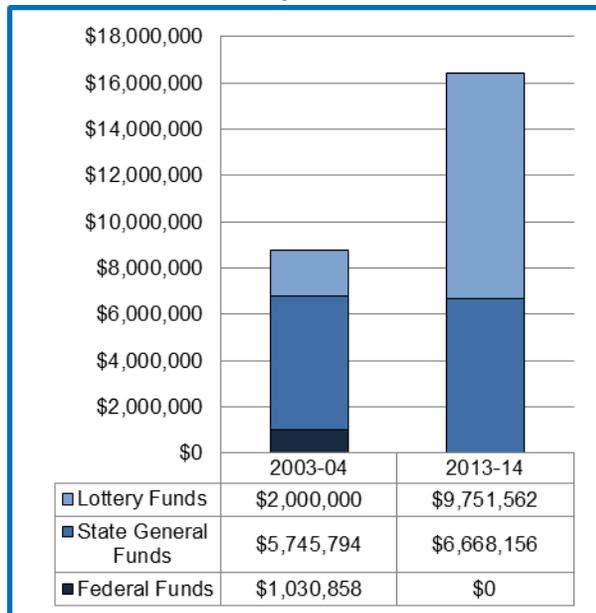
The importance of state-funded financial aid

Since 2003, Nebraska has made progress toward the goal of improving access to higher education by increasing the amount of state funds allocated for need-based financial aid. However, additional financial aid is needed to enable more of Nebraska's low-income and moderately low-income students to go to college, stay enrolled and complete degrees.

Nebraska currently provides need-based financial aid to college students through the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program, originally authorized as the Nebraska State Grant Program by the Nebraska Scholarship Act, which was passed by the Legislature in 2003.

Including state lottery and federal funds, total dollars available for the state grant program increased from \$8,776,652 in 2003–2004 to \$16,419,718 in 2013–2014.

Available Funding for Nebraska's State Grant Program 2013–2014 Compared to 2003–2004



Note. See Figure 1.5.1 (page 90).

As a result of increased funding, the number of low-income students served by the state grant program increased 22.4%, from 13,031 in 2003–

2004 to 15,944 in 2013–2014, and the average award increased from \$670 to \$1,030. (See Figure 1.5.2 on page 91.)

The success of the ACE Scholarship Program

The state-funded Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program, which was initiated in 2007–2008, enables eligible low-income students to take college courses while they are still enrolled in high school.

Using state and federal funds, the amount awarded in ACE scholarships increased from \$114,856 in 2007–2008 to \$921,071 in 2013–2014. For 2014–2015, \$953,890 is available for ACE scholarships.

In 2007–2008, 294 Nebraska high school students took 1,698 credit hours of college coursework as a result of their ACE scholarships. With increased funding, 1,866 low-income Nebraska high school students were able to take 13,592 credit hours of college coursework in 2013–2014. (See Figure 1.5.6 on page 101.)

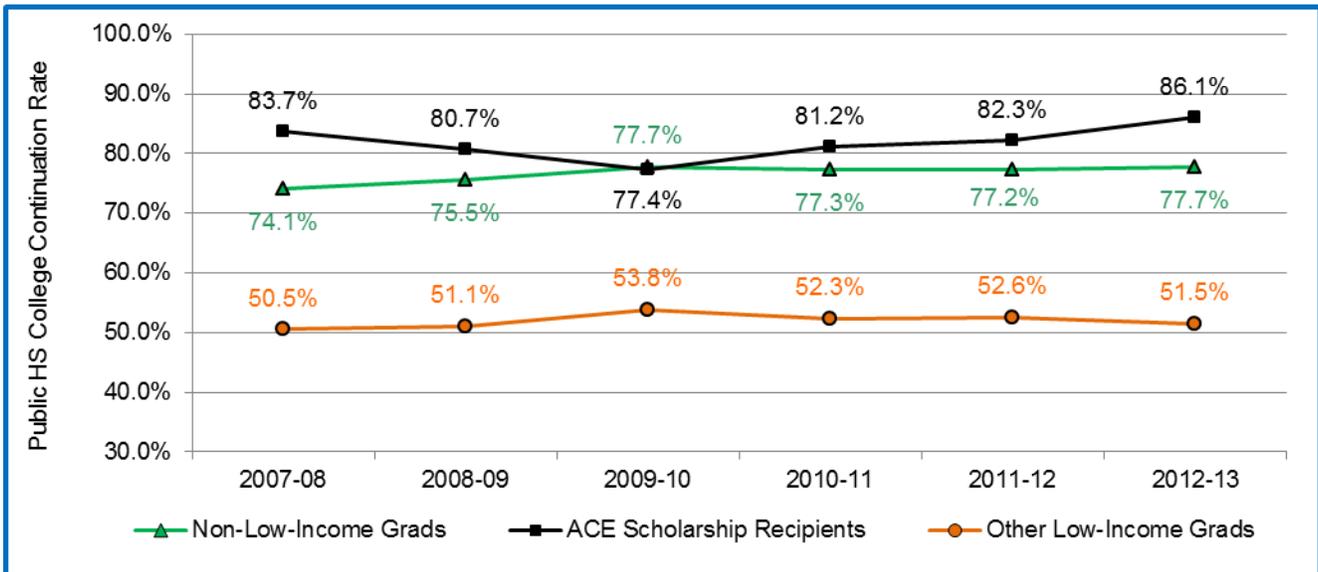
Research on the college continuation rates of ACE Scholarship recipients

The number of students who received ACE scholarships when they were seniors at Nebraska public high schools increased from 215 in 2007–2008 to 951 in 2012–2013.

As illustrated in the chart on the following page, the college continuation rates of ACE scholarship recipients are significantly higher than the college-going rates of other low-income public high school graduates.

Since inception, the college-going rates of ACE scholarship recipients also have been higher than, or about equal to, the college-going rates of non-low-income graduates of the state's public high schools. In effect, the ACE scholarship program has enabled low-income public high school graduates to continue on to college at the same or higher rates as their non-low-income classmates.

**College Continuation Rates for ACE Scholarship Recipients
Compared to the College Continuation Rates of Other Public High School Graduates**



Note. See Figure 1.5.11 (page 107).

The ACE Plus Scholarship

The ACE Plus Scholarship Program was initiated in 2011–2012 to provide assistance to first- and second-year college students who were ACE scholarship recipients prior to graduating from high school. Initially funded with \$223,000 of a federal College Access Challenge Grant, ACE Plus scholarships were awarded to 317 eligible students in 2011–2012.

With \$283,000 in funding, 377 eligible students were awarded ACE Plus scholarships 2014–2015 to help them with their college expenses

during their first or second year of college. Of the 377 students who received ACE Plus scholarships for their second year of college, nearly 80% had 3.0 or higher grade-point averages (GPAs) after their first year of college, and about 51% had first-year GPAs of 3.5 or higher. (See Figure 1.5.14 and Figure 1.5.16 on pages 112 and 113.)

The ACE Plus budget for 2015–2016 is \$237,500. No federal funding is available for the ACE Plus program in 2016–2017. (See Figure 1.5.13 on page 111.)

Priority 2

Increase the percentage of students who enroll and successfully complete a degree

Success is measured not only by the number of freshmen who enroll in college, but by those who stay in college beyond their freshmen year and earn degrees or other awards.

Based on IPEDS data that are collected annually, freshmen retention rates and graduation rates are not improving across all sectors of higher education in Nebraska. Analyses of IPEDS data also show that there are continuing racial/ethnic disparities in graduation rates.¹

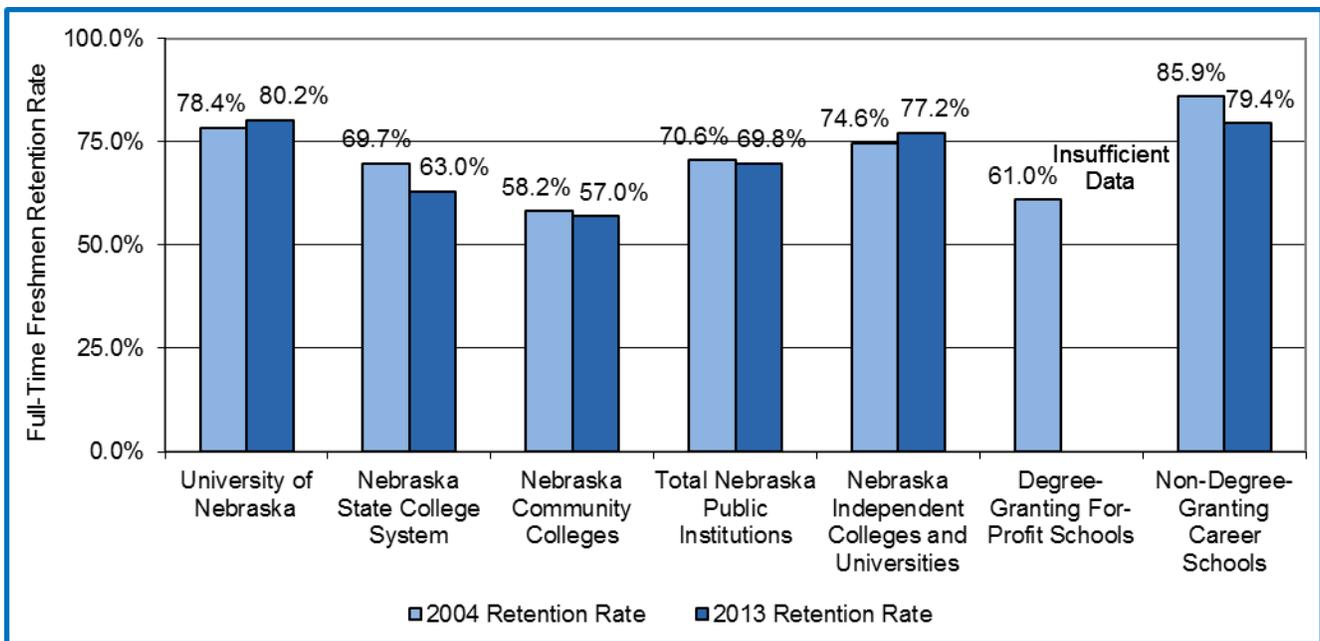
Analysis of records at the National Student Clearinghouse provides evidence that notable percentages of students who start college at Nebraska's public and independent institutions

transfer to other schools where they persist in their studies and earn degrees or certificates. This study also reveals that students who attend college part time are far less likely to complete their degree or certificate program than students who attend college full time.

Freshmen retention rates

As shown in the chart below, full-time freshmen retention rates for the Nebraska State College System, Nebraska's community colleges, and the non-degree-granting career schools were lower in fall 2013 than they were in fall 2004. For the remaining sectors, full-time retention rates were higher in fall 2013 than they were in fall 2004 or

**Full-Time Freshmen Retention Rates of Nebraska Postsecondary Institutions by Sector
Fall 2013 Compared to Fall 2004 Baseline**



Note. See Figure 2.1.1 (page 119).

¹The freshmen retention rate is the number of freshmen who are enrolled at the same college one year later. The IPEDS definition of a college graduation rate is the percentage of full-time, first-time freshmen who complete their degree programs at the same college within 150% of the time specified for the programs. For example, the specified time frame for four-year programs is six years, while the time frame for two-year programs is three years.

data are not sufficient to compute a sector retention rate for fall 2013.

Retention rates for full-time students in fall 2013 varied between the sectors, ranging from 57.0% at the community colleges to 80.2% at the University of Nebraska.

The non-degree granting career schools and the independent colleges and universities also had relatively high fall 2013 retention rates of 79.4% and 77.2%, respectively.

Full-time and part-time retention rates compared

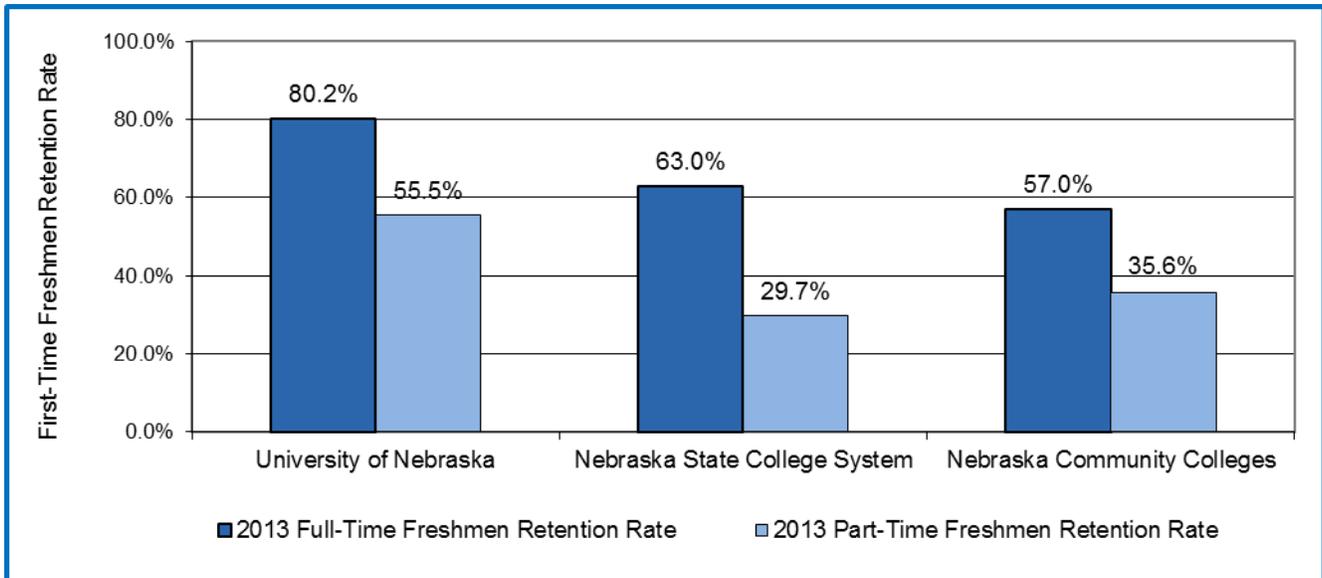
A statewide retention rate for part-time, first-time freshmen cannot be calculated due to insufficient data from some institutions. However, the freshmen retention rates for full-time and part-time students at the state's public institutions can be compared as shown in the chart below. This comparison clearly indicates that students who

start college full time are much more likely than part-time students to continue going to college beyond their freshmen year. Conversely, freshmen who attend college only part time are less likely to continue their studies and, therefore, are less likely to earn degrees.

Nebraska freshmen retention rates compared to those of other states

Nebraska's retention rates for 2013 are generally lower than corresponding national rates. For four-year public institutions, Nebraska's full-time retention rate was 77.3% and its part-time retention rate was 51.7% (compared to 79.9% and 50.2% nationally). For two-year public institutions, Nebraska's full-time retention rate was 57.3% and its part-time rate was 35.5% (compared to 59.3% and 42.9% nationally). (See Figure 2.1.5, Figure 2.1.6, Figure 2.1.9 and Figure 2.1.10 on pages 124 and 128.)

Fall 2013 Full-Time and Part-Time Freshmen Retention Rates for Students in Nebraska's Public Colleges and Universities



Note. See Figure 2.1.1 (page 119) and Figure 2.1.2 (page 120).

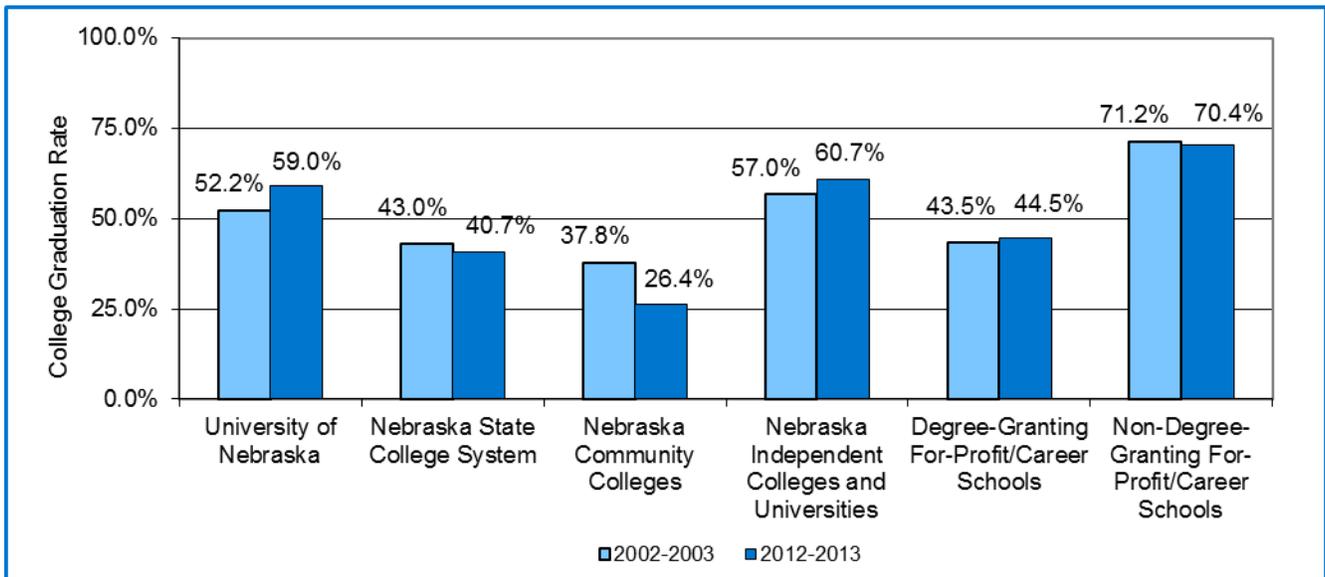
College graduation rates based on IPEDS data

Graduation rates based on IPEDS data can be calculated only for full-time students who graduate from the same college where they started as first-time freshmen.¹ Because transfer students are not counted among the graduates of any reporting institution, IPEDS graduation rates underestimate the percentage of full-time, first-time freshmen who complete degree, certificate or diploma programs. In addition, IPEDS graduation rates cannot be calculated for any students who initially attend college part time.

Based on IPEDS data, the statewide graduation rate for Nebraska institutions increased from 48.4% in 2002–2003 to 48.5% in 2012–2013, the latest year for which data are available. (See Figure 2.2.1 on page 129.)

In 2012–2013, the highest graduation rate among the six sectors of higher education in Nebraska was 70.4%, which was the rate for the non-degree-granting, for-profit schools. The next highest rates were 60.7% for the independent institutions and 59.0% for the University of Nebraska.

**Graduation Rates for Nebraska Postsecondary Institutions by Sector
2012–2013 Compared to 2002–2003**



Note. See Figure 2.2.2 (page 130).

¹The college graduation rate is the percentage of full-time, first-time freshmen who complete their degree programs at the same college within 150% of the time specified for the programs. For example, the specified time frame for four-year programs is six years, while the time frame for two-year programs is three years.

Racial/ethnic disparities in graduation rates

Minorities—who account for most of Nebraska’s projected population growth—currently graduate from the state’s high schools at lower rates than do white non-Hispanics.

Minority students who graduate from high school generally tend to be represented among first-time college freshmen at Nebraska institutions to about the same degree as they are represented among Nebraska’s high school graduating classes. However, black non-Hispanics, Hispanics, Native Americans, and multiracial students have significantly lower college *graduation* rates than whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders who complete degree programs at Nebraska colleges and universities.

Between 2002–2003 and 2012–2013, graduation rates for all racial/ethnic groups increased at the University of Nebraska. (See Figure 2.2.4 on page 133.)

Conversely, graduation rates for the Nebraska State College System decreased or remained about the same for all racial/ethnic groups. (See Figure 2.2.5 on page 134.)

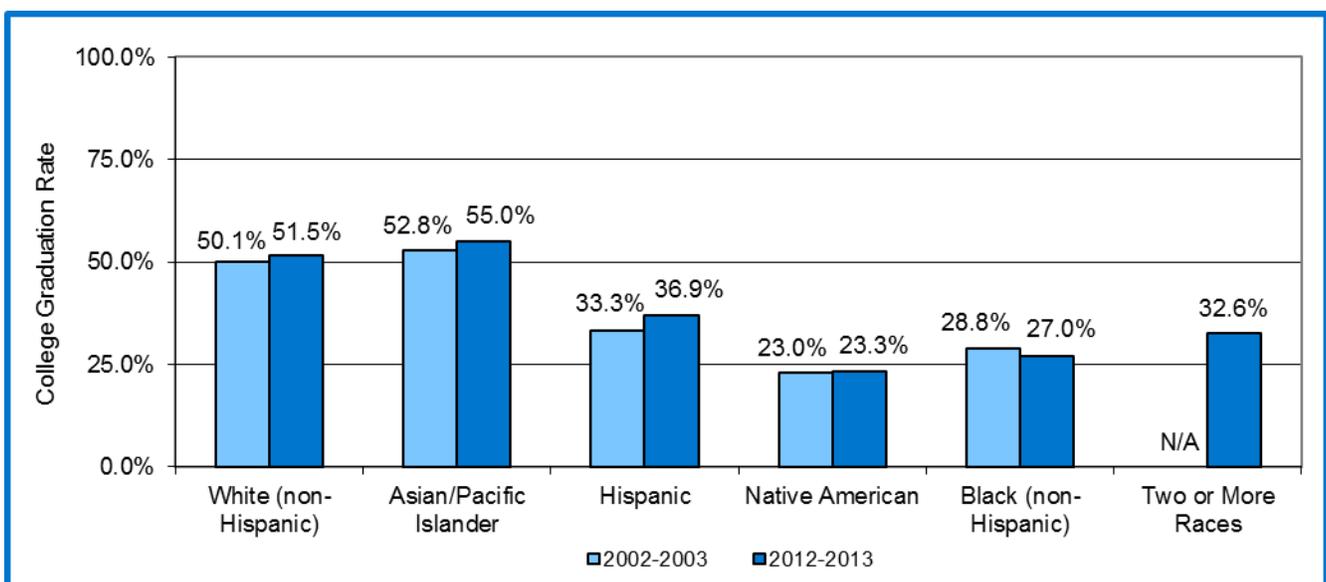
Meanwhile, rates at the state’s community colleges decreased for all racial/ethnic groups except for Hispanics. This is possibly due, at least in part, to the increasing number of students who have enrolled in academic transfer programs and transfer before they graduate from the community colleges. (See Figure 2.2.6 on page 134.)

Graduation rates increased for white non-Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders within the independent sector (see Figure 2.2.7 on page 135) and the sectors consisting of degree-granting (see Figure 2.2.8 on page 135) and non-degree-granting for-profit career schools (see Figure 2.2.9 on page 136). Within each of these three sectors, rates also decreased for black non-Hispanics, but were varied for Hispanics and Native Americans.

Nebraska graduation rates compared to those of other states

Nebraska’s 2012–2013 graduation rate for four-year institutions was 57.0%, compared to 55.2% nationally. For two-year institutions, Nebraska’s graduation rate was 28.2%, slightly lower than the national rate of 29.4%. (See Figure 2.2.16 and Figure 2.2.17 on pages 141 and 142.)

**Graduation Rates for Nebraska Postsecondary Institutions by Race/Ethnicity
2012–2013 Compared to 2002–2003**



Note. See Figure 2.2.2 (page 132).

Graduation and persistence rates based on National Student Clearinghouse data

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center recently conducted a study of six-year student outcomes based on a national cohort of degree-seeking, first-time freshmen who started college in fall 2007, analyzed by state as well as for the United States as a whole. This report is available at <http://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport6-statesupplement/>.

For this research, students were classified by the state of the institution where they first started college and by type of institution. Based on Clearinghouse enrollment and completion records, comparable six-year completion and persistence rates were calculated for the students who started college at (a) two-year public colleges, (b) four-year public colleges and universities, and (c) four-year private nonprofit institutions.¹

In addition, completion and persistence rates were calculated for exclusively full-time students, exclusively part-time students, mixed enrollment students with combinations of full- and part-time enrollment, students who started college when they were 20 years of age or younger, students who started college when they were 21 to 24 years of age, and students who were 25 or older when they first enrolled in college.

The completion and persistence rates that the Clearinghouse calculated for Nebraska were sometimes higher and sometimes lower than the comparable national rates, depending on the type of institution and the student enrollment or age group that was analyzed.

More importantly, the findings of the study confirm that college completion and persistence rates vary significantly by student enrollment status and age group, as well as by the type of institution where students first enroll.

The findings of the Clearinghouse study are evidence that students who enroll initially at four-year institutions—public or private nonprofit—are more likely to earn degrees or certificates, or at least persist in their studies, than students who start college at two-year institutions, regardless of whether they enroll full or part time.

However, students who are able to attend college full time—exclusively or at least sometime during the course of their studies—are much more likely to earn degrees or certificates and less likely to drop out of college than students who go to college only part time.

The findings of the Clearinghouse study also are evidence that students who start college when they are age 20 or younger are more likely to persist in their studies and complete degree or certificate programs than students who don't start college until they are over the age of 20. This is not surprising since non-traditional students often have family and work responsibilities that may be equally or more important than finishing college.

The completion rates calculated by the Clearinghouse also confirm that a notable percentage of freshmen start college at one institution and then transfer to another where they complete a program of study. Specifically, 15% to 19% of the degree-seeking, first-time students at Nebraska's public and private nonprofit institutions in fall 2007 graduated from two-year or four-year schools to which they had transferred. (See Figure 2.3.3 on page 148.)

Another finding of interest is that 16.2% of the students who initially enrolled at Nebraska's two-year public colleges in fall 2007 graduated from four-year institutions over the course of the next six years. (See Table A12.2.b on page 341.)

¹Completion rates and graduation rates are synonymous terms. In general, a completion or graduation rate is the percentage of students in a specified cohort who earn degrees, certificates, or diplomas within a specified period of time. A persistence rate is the percentage of the students in a cohort who have not earned degrees or other academic awards but who are still enrolled in college at the end of a specified period of time.

Priority 3

Reduce, eliminate, and then reverse the net out-migration of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census revealed that Nebraska experienced a net out-migration of college-educated adults at all levels of education beyond high school between 1995 and 2000. During the same period, Nebraska attracted a significant net in-migration of adults with less than a high school education.

Beginning in 2005, the U.S. Census Bureau started collecting data annually through the American Community Survey (ACS) to estimate net migration by education level for each state. Since the resulting annual ACS estimates for Nebraska are based on very small samples of the people who move in or out of the state, these estimates vary dramatically from one year to the next.

Combining the latest three years of ACS data increases sample sizes and reduces the margins of error associated with the corresponding estimates of average annual net migration. Still, these estimates do not provide policy makers with a clear, complete picture of the migration patterns of adults who are moving to or from Nebraska.

Based on ACS data collected from 2005 to 2011, Nebraska seems to attract more working-age adults with less than a high school diploma than have left the state. However, ACS data are inadequate to determine the exact magnitude of this important migration trend.

Between 2007 and 2011, Nebraska also may have experienced a net in-migration of working-age adults with high school diplomas, or some college but no degrees, or associate's or bachelor's degrees, but the evidence is inconclusive, and the migration estimates are unstable from year to year.

Data from the most recent ACS in 2013 indicates that there was a net out-migration of working-age adults with bachelor's degrees. While it can be concluded that Nebraska exported more 22- to 64-year-olds with bachelor's degrees in 2013, the available data are inadequate to precisely determine the magnitude of this negative net migration in 2013. (See Figure 3.2 on page 161.)

Furthermore, there is no solid evidence that Nebraska is gaining or losing more working-age adults with less than high school diplomas, high school diplomas, associate degrees, or graduate or professional degrees than it has in the past.

Although data currently available from the U.S. Census Bureau do not reveal a clear picture of Nebraska migration patterns, there is still reason to be concerned about the possible effects of migration on the size and quality of the state's labor force. Consequently, the Commission will continue to monitor the available estimates of net migration by education level in an effort to determine if a clear, overall picture of Nebraska's net migration pattern eventually emerges from the analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Conclusion

Attainment Gap

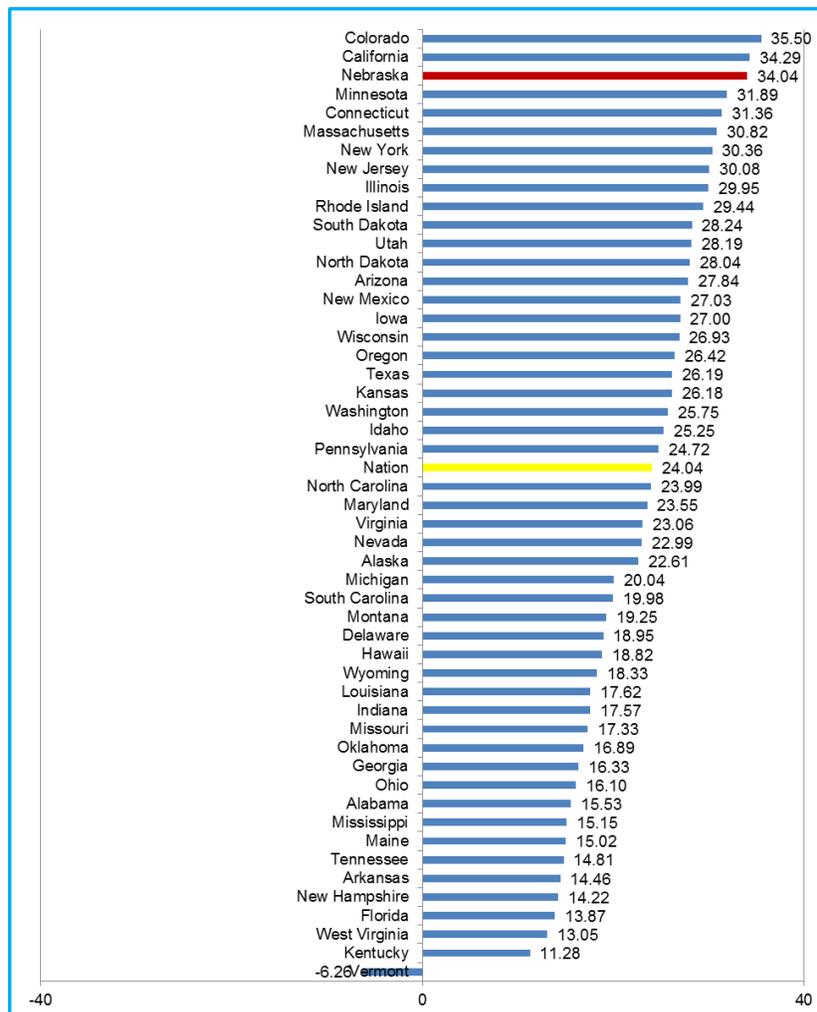
The consequence of the disparities in high school graduation rates, college continuation rates, and college graduation rates is that Nebraska's gap in educational attainment between whites and underrepresented minorities (i.e., blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans) is the third largest in the nation.

In Nebraska, 52.26% of 25-to-44-year old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate's

degree or higher. In comparison, only 18.22% of 25-to-44-year old underrepresented minorities have completed an associate's degree or higher.

Nationally, 48.02% of 25-to-44-year old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate's degree or higher. In comparison, only 23.97% of 25-to-44-year old underrepresented minorities have completed an associate's degree or higher.

Estimated Difference in College Attainment Between Whites and Minorities (Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans) of 25-to-44-Year Olds by State Based on the 2011–2013 American Community Survey (ACS)



Data source: Estimates based on the 2011, 2012, and 2013 American Community Surveys, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, obtained from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

The findings evidenced in this report indicate that more work needs to be done in order for Nebraskans to enroll in college and successfully complete degrees.

At the High School Level:

- Increase the percentage of students who stay in school and earn diplomas. Nebraska's 2012-2013 public high school graduation rate is one of the best in the nation (88.5%), and Nebraska's 2013-2014 graduation rate was even higher (90%), but disparities continue to be seen. While 92% of females graduate, only 87% of males earn diplomas. Disparities are even more pronounced between racial/ethnic groups with only 69% (Native American) to 87% (two or more races) of minorities earning diplomas.
- Increase the percentage of students who are prepared academically for college and who take dual enrollment courses. According to ACT, only 29% Nebraska's ACT-tested high school graduates are sufficiently prepared to succeed in college.
- For males, minorities, and low-income students especially, more effort needs to be exerted to increase:
 - The percent who are prepared for college academically
 - The number who take dual enrollment courses
 - High school graduation rates
 - College-going rates

At the Postsecondary Level:

- Increase the percentage of high school graduates who go on to college, encouraging as many as possible to enroll full-time and not delay enrollment. About 70.8% of Nebraska public high school graduates go on to college, but National Student Clearinghouse research shows that those who attend school full-time are much more likely to earn degrees than those who attend part-time.

- Increase awareness of the range of higher education opportunities, especially at the community colleges.
- Reach out to adults with college credit but no earned certificates or degrees.
- Increase efforts to improve retention and persistence rates. Full-time retention rates vary by sector, ranging from 57.0% at the community colleges to 80.2% at the University of Nebraska.
- Increase efforts to improve graduation rates for all students across all sectors of higher education in Nebraska, especially at the community colleges and for minority students at all institutions. Using IPEDS data, the statewide graduation rate for full-time first-time freshmen at Nebraska's institutions was 48.5%, but only 26.4% at the community colleges. While graduation rates are generally increasing for minority students, they continue to lag behind their white non-Hispanic and Asian classmates.

At the State Government Level:

- Continue to support and increase funding for the Nebraska Opportunity Grant program and the ACE program.
- Develop and build support for clear completion targets for Nebraska's public-funded colleges and universities.
- Initiate incentives for the state's public-funded colleges and universities to improve graduation rates and increase the number of degrees and certificates awarded.

Institutions Reporting to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) During the Period from 2003 to 2014

University of Nebraska (5)

Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture
University of Nebraska at Kearney
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
University of Nebraska Medical Center
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Nebraska State College System (3)

Chadron State College
Peru State College
Wayne State College

Nebraska Community Colleges (6)

Central Community College
Metropolitan Community College
Mid-Plains Community College
Northeast Community College
Southeast Community College
Western Nebraska Community College

Independent College & Universities (19)

Bellevue University
Bryan College of Health Sciences
Clarkson College
College of Saint Mary
Concordia University-Seward
Creighton University
Dana College (closed in 2010)
Doane College-Crete
Doane College-Lincoln
Grace University
Hastings College
Little Priest Tribal College
Midland University
Nebraska Indian Community College
Nebraska Methodist College of Nursing & Allied Health
Nebraska Wesleyan University
Summit Christian College
Union College
York College

Degree-Granting For-Profit/Career Schools (12)

Alegent Health School of Radiologic Technology
ITT Technical Institute-Omaha
Kaplan University-Lincoln Campus
Kaplan University-Omaha Campus
Mary Lanning Memorial Hospital School
of Radiologic Technology
Myotherapy Institute
National American University-Bellevue
Omaha School of Massage and Healthcare
of Herzing University
The Creative Center
Universal College of Healing Arts
University of Phoenix-Omaha Campus
Vatterott College-Spring Valley

Non-Degree Granting For-Profit/Career Schools (7)

Capitol School of Hairstyling and Esthetics
College of Hair Design
Fullen School of Hair Design
Joseph's College
La'James International College
Regional West Medical Center School
of Radiologic Technology
Xenon International Academy-Omaha