

# 2015 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report

## Introduction

The *2015 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* is the tenth annual report designed to provide the Nebraska Legislature with comparative statistics to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three major goals for Nebraska's postsecondary education system. Developed by the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force in 2003, these key priorities 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, persist, 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.<sup>1</sup>

The *2015 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* or the *2005 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report for the LR Legislative Evaluation Task Force*. These comparisons evidence 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Neb. 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.

Nebraska's postsecondary education system consists of five sectors of higher education—the University of Nebraska; the Nebraska State College System; Nebraska's community colleges; the independent (non-profit) colleges and universities; and the for-profit/career schools. This report covers all five sectors and also includes important information about Nebraska high schools, which are a primary source of students for Nebraska's postsecondary institutions.

Prior to this report, Nebraska's 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, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.<sup>2</sup> Copies of all previous progress reports are available on the Coordinating Commission's Website: [www.ccpe.ne.gov](http://www.ccpe.ne.gov). However, due to data corrections and additions to the Commission's database that have been made since the 2014 report was published, **the 2015 Progress Report supersedes all previous editions.**

The *2015 Progress Report* provides an update of every section of the 2013 report—from an analysis of the pool of Nebraska high school graduates preparing for college to the migration of educated Nebraskans to and from the state—provided that updated information is available to report.

In updating this report, the Coordinating Commission always uses the latest data available for analysis. However, for several of the analyses for this report, the Commission has to rely primarily on data collected through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which is 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.

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<sup>2</sup> The 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.