

Chapter One

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR NEBRASKA'S FUTURE

Vision for Nebraska Higher Education

Nebraskans will reap many benefits from affordable, accessible, and high-quality **postsecondary** education. Nebraska's people will value and support **postsecondary** institutions that are vital, vigorous, and visionary. Each **postsecondary** institution will fulfill its role and mission with distinction by being responsive to changing academic, workforce, societal, economic, **cultural**, and community development needs. Together, Nebraska's institutions will provide access to educational opportunities that meet the diverse needs of students and citizens; **create environments that foster student success; position Nebraska to excel in the global economy;** and exercise careful, creative, **and cooperative** stewardship of available resources.

The Evolving Environment

Nebraska is known as the home of the "good life," made possible by good public K-12 schools, **high quality of life, low unemployment,** a strong work ethic, **rich cultural offerings,** and an array of **postsecondary** education opportunities. **Given the demographic and economic realities within the state and rapid changes in the global economy, this *Plan* charts a course for creative and proactive leadership in postsecondary education that can position Nebraska to maintain the good life far into the future.**

Nebraska is a geographically large state with a widely dispersed population. Minority populations are the only segment of the population projected to show any long-term growth, and that growth will be gradual compared to the rest of the nation. **Nebraska's working-age population is projected to grow by only 3 percent between 2010 and 2030. The only significant population growth is expected to occur in the thirteen metropolitan counties located primarily in the southeastern quarter of the state.** These demographic projections, combined with Nebraska's traditionally low unemployment rates, its aging population, and its relative lack of net in-migration, will exacerbate existing workforce shortages and threaten the state's future economic growth.

While the state's population is projected to **grow slowly,** the costs of needed local, state, and federal government services and infrastructures, including those of public

postsecondary education, will likely continue to grow. This places an increasing burden on the taxpayers of the state. Nebraska traditionally has one of the highest participation rates in postsecondary education in the country. It also ranks among the top ten states in the nation in per capita state appropriation for public postsecondary education. Many of the state's taxpayers are working in low-paying jobs compared to other states, making the tax burden even greater.

This *Plan* builds on the educational strengths of the state. The state and its postsecondary institutions can work together to effectively address the challenges facing Nebraska and prepare the state and its citizens to be successful. The economic base in Nebraska may have limitations, but Nebraska's educational base is strong and provides an opportunity to determine the state's destiny.

The following section highlights some of the major forces for change in the future, along with their potential impacts on postsecondary education and the state.

DEMOGRAPHIC FORCES

- The state as a whole will experience modest population growth, with metropolitan and other urban areas experiencing most of the growth. In contrast, many rural counties will continue to lose population.
- Statewide, total numbers of high school graduates are projected to continue to increase slightly over the next five years before leveling off by 2022. Hispanics are the only population group expected to consistently increase in the number of high school graduates.
- The population will become more diverse as numbers of Hispanics and other minorities grow faster than the general population.
- Nebraska's postsecondary education attainment gap between minority populations and the white, non-Hispanic population is among the worst in the country.
- Migrants to Nebraska from other states tend to have lower incomes, lower educational attainment, and be from minority groups.
- About 40% of PK-12 students qualify for free and reduced lunches.
- The proportion of Nebraskans aged 65 and older will increase from 13.5 percent in 2010 to 20.4 percent in 2030. The proportion of Nebraskans aged 20 to 64 is projected to decline from 58.4 percent to 53.6 percent.
- High proportions of Nebraskans aged 55 and older are employed compared to most states and the nation.

Potential Impacts:

- Overall, institutions of postsecondary education will see increased competition for traditional-age, in-state students.
- More of these students than in the past will come to postsecondary education with substantial financial need.

- Institutions will develop new strategies and support programs for attracting, retaining, and graduating minority students.
- Nebraska institutions will intensify efforts to recruit out-of-state students, including international students, and will work harder to retain Nebraska students.
- As more adults remain in the workforce, there will be a continuing need for access to lifelong learning and retraining opportunities to keep skills current to workplace needs.
- Many adults will require some form of adult basic education, including English Language Learner (ELL) instruction.
- Institutions will develop new strategies and support programs for attracting and retaining adult students who need new skills and training, many of whom will enroll part-time and take courses via distance education technology.
- As the population becomes more diverse, educational attainment will decrease unless educational participation among minorities increases.

ECONOMIC FORCES

- Employers are demanding a skilled workforce that can keep pace with an explosion of knowledge and rapid technological change – locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.
- It is estimated that 71 percent of Nebraska jobs will require at least some postsecondary education by 2020. This includes everything from vocational certificates through graduate and professional degrees.
- Nebraska consistently has one of the nation's lowest unemployment rates.
- Economic growth in Nebraska is limited by shortages of workers, especially those with science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and design training.
- Nebraska ranks low in comparison with other states in private and federal research funds, limiting opportunities for new business growth and innovation within the state.
- Agriculture remains a foundation of Nebraska's economy and is becoming more technical and diversified, with increasing emphasis on precision production, value-added processing, and niche marketing.
- Economic development is constrained by the out-migration of Nebraskans with at least some postsecondary education.

Potential Impacts:

- Postsecondary institutions will need to respond rapidly to employer needs and become increasingly flexible in course content and in the use of technology in delivery of instruction.
- Institutions will see a growing demand from business for specialized knowledge and skill certifications (in professional, vocational, and technical areas such as information technology) to meet workforce needs.

- The state will consider incentives for recruiting and educating students in targeted workforce shortage areas.
- Efforts to raise student awareness of workforce shortage areas and career opportunities will begin as early as middle school.
- Businesses will expect increased levels of assistance from postsecondary education in the areas of technology transfer, applied research, and technical assistance.
- Advances in information technologies will create expanded opportunities for businesses to locate production facilities at sites remote from central offices.
- It will become increasingly important for the state's primary research institutions to compete effectively for federal and private research funding.
- Postsecondary institutions will continue to encourage and reward innovation and entrepreneurship, not only among their faculty and their students but Nebraska businesses, as well.

POLITICAL FORCES

- Competition for state funding continues to grow, as does the motivation to lower the state and local tax burdens on businesses and individuals.
- Provision of services for an aging population is requiring more attention and resources from state policymakers.
- Support remains strong for public institutions that demonstrate responsiveness to local, regional, and state needs.
- There is growing pressure on both K-12 and postsecondary education that students be adequately prepared for college and careers.
- The significant increase in the cost of education and student indebtedness has led to an increasing recognition among lawmakers that postsecondary education must be made more affordable.
- State and national policymakers are increasingly interested in understanding employment outcomes and providing that information to students in an easily accessible and transparent manner.
- State and national policymakers and accrediting bodies increasingly expect measures of accountability and performance from postsecondary education institutions.

Potential Impacts:

- Restrictions on property taxes for K-12 education and community colleges, as well as other state and local taxes, may result in heightened competition for state tax funds and increased tuition.
- Students, parents, and state and federal policymakers will demand creative solutions to reduce college cost and student debt and mitigate its effects on career, family, and consumption opportunities.
- Postsecondary educational institutions will have a strong, vested interest in the welfare of Nebraska's economy and in the employment outcomes of their

students.

- Reporting on employment outcomes for graduates, both in terms of location and earnings, will become more prevalent at the state and federal levels.
- The accountability expectations of governing boards, legislators, consumers, and accrediting agencies will result in improved institutional accountability measures and clearer reporting.

EDUCATIONAL FORCES

- Nebraska has achieved one of the highest high school graduation rates in the country. However, there are significant differences in graduation rates by race and ethnicity.
- Nebraska has traditionally had a very high rate of participation in postsecondary education, though other states are closing the gap in terms of the percentage of high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education.
- As in other states, too many Nebraska high school graduates are required to take remedial courses when they enroll in college.
- High schools and colleges are facing increasing demands to provide a challenging curriculum that allows appropriately prepared high school students to take college-level courses for high school and college credit.
- Career academies are increasing in popularity as postsecondary education, K-12, and the business community partner to address workforce needs.
- “Nontraditional” students – including students older than 22, students with children, veterans, and students who work full time – make up a significant proportion of postsecondary enrollments.
- Nebraska’s college students are mobile. Each fall, over 25 percent of new-to-campus students at public institutions are transfer students, and Nebraska students complete their undergraduate degrees after transferring at a higher percentage than the national average. Many independent Nebraska postsecondary institutions enroll large numbers of transfer students as well.
- Postsecondary institutions increasingly rely on part-time faculty to teach courses.
- Both the cost of education for taxpayers and the price of education for students and parents are rising faster than general inflation and family incomes.
- In spite of progress in addressing deferred maintenance needs, facilities on the campuses are aging and are in need of repair, replacement, renovation, and adaptation to new technologies.
- Information technology is ubiquitous in all aspects of postsecondary education, from classrooms to communications to media access to student services and research. There are no areas of postsecondary education untouched by the need for up-to-date software, hardware, and high-speed broadband capacity.

- Information technologies have vastly expanded access to postsecondary education. Distance is less relevant to off-campus postsecondary instruction for more learners, and many on-campus students enroll in a mix of face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses.
- Nationally, corporations, for-profit postsecondary institutions, and new training entities such as coding academies and massive open online course providers are responding rapidly to the open market environment, greatly expanding opportunities for in-house corporate training, online courses, and training programs that are valued by employers but do not award traditional credentials.
- As new providers enter the market, competency-based credentials are vying for credibility alongside traditional credit-hour based credentials.

Potential Impacts:

- High schools and colleges will concur on what constitutes college and career readiness and align testing and curricula to mitigate the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.
- Postsecondary institutions and high schools will increasingly offer dual and concurrent enrollment programs for high school students to enrich the high school curriculum and provide a transition to college.
- Growing student mobility and affordability concerns will require that postsecondary institutions continue to strengthen transfer and articulation agreements.
- More students will borrow and/or borrow more to fund their education.
- Many students will be employed while in college, typically adding to the time it takes them to complete their education. Some may not graduate, or may enroll intermittently for long periods of time.
- The State of Nebraska and the institutions will continue to direct funds toward maintenance, repair, replacement, and renovation of existing facilities, as well as adapting facilities to new technologies.
- As costs of education continue to escalate, institutions increasingly will look toward methods of collaboration with other institutions to become more efficient.
- Faculty will be expected to be proficient in the use of new technologies and many will be more involved in developing technology-mediated course materials in addition to their other responsibilities.
- Efforts must be made to ensure that inadequate internet access and/or speed does not limit the ability of communities and students to take advantage of the full range of course offerings now available online.
- The postsecondary environment will remain highly competitive as new education and training providers enter Nebraska either physically or online. Quality and consumer protection standards will need to adapt to the changing environment nationally and in states.

Shared Values and Beliefs

Continuing focus on this *Plan's* vision for postsecondary education will help ensure that Nebraskans now and in the future benefit from the "good life" for which the state is known. The vision is based on the following values and beliefs that the Coordinating Commission shares with the leaders of Nebraska postsecondary education institutions and their governing board members:

- All Nebraska citizens deserve reasonable and affordable access to postsecondary education opportunities appropriate to their individual needs and abilities, unrestricted by age, culture, disabilities, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.
- While access to postsecondary education is paramount, it is not an end in itself. Student success is the ultimate goal of postsecondary education and is the shared responsibility of students and institutions.
- Nebraska's citizens benefit from a comprehensive network of diverse and high-quality postsecondary education institutions that maintain distinct, but complementary, roles and missions.
- The state benefits when Nebraska institutions focus resources on unique areas of excellence in which they can bring major benefits to the state and to students.
- A cooperative relationship between postsecondary education and K-12 education is needed to ensure that students enter postsecondary education prepared to succeed.
- Postsecondary education has an important role in supporting the state's economic development goals by contributing to a competent and competitive workforce for our state, by ensuring lifelong learning and training opportunities for our citizens, and by promoting an innovative and entrepreneurial culture that rises to the challenge of globalization.
- Nebraska's postsecondary institutions fill a vital role in many communities by serving as a cultural hub, not only educating their students in the arts and humanities but sharing those learning opportunities with the public whenever possible.
- Postsecondary education's ability to apply information technology effectively to respond rapidly to changing student, employer, and state needs is critical to its success.
- Nebraska's public institutions rely on State of Nebraska funding policies that are fair and predictable and offer appropriate levels of support to enable the institutions to meet the educational needs of students and the state.
- Nebraska public institutions are accountable to the taxpayers for making wise use of resources for programs, services, and facilities, as well as for avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- Nebraska strives to perform at the highest levels nationally in terms of postsecondary access, success, affordability, efficiency, and impact and will measure its performance and progress in these areas.

Major Statewide Goals

The following major statewide goals are critical to the achievement of this *Plan's* vision for postsecondary education in Nebraska. Accomplishing these goals will require substantial cooperative effort on the part of all persons involved with higher education in the state. Further discussion of each major statewide goal and strategies for the accomplishment of each major goal form the framework for chapters two through six of this *Plan*:

Meeting the Needs of Students (Chapter Two)

- ◆ Nebraska's institutions and policymakers will increase participation and success in postsecondary education, particularly for low-income and underrepresented populations, and ensure that access and opportunity for success are unrestricted by age, culture, disabilities, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.
- ◆ Nebraska postsecondary institutions and policymakers will collaborate to ensure that lack of financial resources will not prevent students from accessing and completing postsecondary education in a timely manner without unreasonable student debt.
- ◆ Nebraska's postsecondary institutions will be student-centered, create inclusive environments that foster student success, and offer lifelong learning opportunities that are responsive to students' needs.
- ◆ Nebraska colleges and universities will provide their graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful employees, innovative entrepreneurs, and responsible citizens on a global stage.

Meeting the Needs of the State (Chapter Three)

- ◆ Nebraska will close the historical educational attainment gaps between majority and underrepresented populations and be among the leading states in overall educational attainment.
- ◆ Postsecondary education in Nebraska will be responsive to the workforce development and ongoing training needs of employers and industries to build and sustain a knowledgeable, trained, and skilled workforce in both rural and urban areas of the state.
- ◆ Postsecondary institutions will contribute to the health and prosperity of the people and to the vitality of the state through research and development efforts, technology transfer and technical assistance, and by attracting external funds to support these activities.

- ◆ **Postsecondary education institutions will assess evolving needs and priorities of the students and people of Nebraska in a timely manner and will adopt new methods and technologies to address them.**
- ◆ **Postsecondary education will serve the state by preparing individuals for productive, fulfilling lives and by developing and nurturing the citizens and future leaders of Nebraska.**
- ◆ **Postsecondary education institutions will maintain their distinctive role as providers of cultural and artistic opportunities to students and their communities through study, research, and programming.**

Meeting Needs by Building Exemplary Institutions (Chapter Four)

- ◆ Each Nebraska institution will fulfill its role and mission in an exemplary manner and will compare favorably with peer institutions.
- ◆ Nebraska will value **postsecondary** education and support its investment in public **postsecondary** education through fair and reliable funding policies that provide appropriate levels of support to enable institutions to excel and meet the educational needs of the state and its students.
- ◆ **Postsecondary** education in Nebraska will be effective in meeting the needs of students and the state, will be efficient in its expenditure of the state's resources, and will be accountable for developing, sustaining, **and demonstrating** exemplary teaching, learning, research, and public service.

Meeting Educational Needs through Partnerships and Collaboration (Chapter Five)

- ◆ **Postsecondary** education institutions will work as partners with one another and with other entities, **including those in the private sector**, whenever appropriate to share resources and deliver programs cooperatively to enhance learning opportunities for Nebraska residents.
- ◆ **Postsecondary** education will work effectively with elementary and secondary schools to improve teaching and learning at all levels of education, **provide opportunities for early college enrollment, and ensure the college and career readiness of all high school graduates.**

Facilities Planning to Meet Educational Needs (Chapter Six)

- ◆ **Nebraska will promote** a physical environment at each of its public postsecondary institutions that is supportive of role and mission; is well utilized and effectively accommodates space needs; is safe, accessible, cost effective, and well maintained; and is flexible to adapt to future changes in programs and technologies.

Measuring Accomplishments

Nebraska is committed to measuring its progress toward achieving the major statewide goals through national comparisons and institutional peer comparisons. It is the aim of this *Plan* that, when rank order is appropriate, Nebraska will rank among the ten best states in national comparisons and individual public institutions will rank among the five best institutions in peer comparisons.

National Comparisons

1. Educational attainment by race/ethnicity and age (25 to 34 and 25 to 64)
2. Public high school graduation rates
3. Percentage of ACT-tested high school graduates who met or exceeded college readiness benchmarks
4. Percentage of high school graduates going directly to college
5. Percentage of population enrolled in college: persons 25-49 without an associate's degree or higher
6. Percentage of first-time, full-time baccalaureate-seeking students who graduated within four years at public four-year institutions
7. Six-year completion rates at any campus for students who started at public four-year campuses
8. Six-year completion rates at any campus for students who started at public two-year campuses
9. State and local appropriations per FTE student
10. Net tuition revenue per FTE student
11. State need-based grant aid per FTE student
12. Percentage of family income needed to pay net price for full-time enrollment at public two-and four-year institutions: families with median incomes
13. Percentage of family income needed to pay net price for full-time enrollment at public two-and four-year institutions: families in lowest income quintile

Peer Comparisons

1. Enrollment percentages by race/ethnicity and low-income status (Pell)
2. Graduation and enrollment status at six and eight years
3. Graduation rates – 150 percent of normal time by race/ethnicity
4. Four-year graduation rates – four-year campuses
5. Persistence/attainment outcomes by end of year two – community colleges
6. Remedial student course taking and success – community colleges
7. State and local appropriations per FTE student
8. Tuition and fees per FTE student
9. Education and general spending per FTE student and degree
10. Average net price of attendance for students receiving grant or scholarship aid
11. Average net price of attendance for students receiving federal financial aid from the two lowest income quintiles
12. Percentage of undergraduates with federal loans and median federal loan debt of graduates
13. Research and development expenditures – all sources, University of Nebraska campuses
14. Research and development expenditures – federal sources, University of Nebraska campuses

Non-comparative Measures

1. Percentage of high school graduates going directly to college by race/ethnicity, gender, and income – state
2. Dual credit, AP, and other early college enrollments – state
3. Number of recent high school graduates placed into remedial education – state
4. Number of degrees and credentials awarded in identified high-need areas –

institutional and state

5. Number of students completing adult basic education and continuing into postsecondary education – institutional and state
6. Enrollment in non-credit, continuing education – institutional and state
7. Employment outcomes of graduates – institutional and state
8. Educational attainment by county