

# 2026 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report

## Introduction

The *Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* is an 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 subsection (3) of LB 962 (2006), now Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1428, 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 *2026 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 latest available statistics are analyzed in the context of 10-year trends. 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.

Nebraska's postsecondary education system consists of four sectors of higher education. This report covers all four sectors and includes important information about Nebraska high schools, which are a primary source of students for Nebraska's postsecondary institutions. As defined in the Coordinating Commission's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*, there are three public sectors of higher education in Nebraska:

University of Nebraska: "The University of Nebraska provides extensive, comprehensive postsecondary education to Nebraska citizens through its four administrative units: the

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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.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The two-year Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, under the management of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UNL, is also part of the University of Nebraska system.”

Nebraska State College System: “The state colleges at Chadron, Peru, and Wayne are regional institutions that provide educational programs and public services to meet needs indigenous to their service areas.”

Nebraska Community Colleges: “Community colleges provide educational options for students seeking career training or transfer to a four-year institution. The education program may culminate in an associate of applied science degree, diploma, or certificate; or an associate of arts or associate of science degree from an academic transfer program.” Nebraska’s six public community colleges are: Central, Metropolitan, Mid-Plains, Northeast, Southeast, and Western Nebraska.

In addition to the public colleges and universities, private not-for-profit, private for-profit, out-of-state public, and federally-funded tribal colleges submit data to IPEDS and are categorized as Nonpublic Colleges and Universities. Several institutions in this sector no longer report to IPEDS due to school closings and institutional changes. See page 132 for more details.

The *2026 Progress Report* provides an update of every section of the 2025 report—from an analysis of the pool of Nebraska high school graduates preparing for college to the migration of educated working-age adults to and from the state—provided that updated information is available to report. Copies of previous Progress Reports are available on the Coordinating Commission’s website: [ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports](https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports). However, due to data corrections and additions to the Commission’s database that have been made since the previous reports were published, **the 2026 Progress Report supersedes all previous editions.**

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 must 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.