

## NEBRASKA'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY COMMITMENT

### Why Is Nebraska's Commitment To College and Career Readiness So Critical?

#### A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS NO LONGER ENOUGH FOR SUCCESS

*Today, nearly every good job requires some postsecondary education and/or training – such as an associate's or bachelor's degree, certificate, license, or completion of an apprenticeship or significant on-the-job training.*

In 1950, 60% of jobs were classified as unskilled, attainable by young people with high school diplomas or less. Today, less than 20% jobs are considered to be unskilled.<sup>i</sup>

*One result:* The demand for middle- and high-skilled workers is outpacing the state's supply of workers educated and experienced at that level.

- **79% of Nebraska's jobs are middle- or high-skill** (jobs that require some postsecondary education or training).
- Yet only 41% of Nebraska's adults have some postsecondary degree (associate's or higher).<sup>ii</sup>

#### TOO MANY STUDENTS GRADUATE UNPREPARED FOR REAL WORLD CHALLENGES

*Currently, far too many students drop out or graduate from high school without the knowledge and skills required for success, closing doors and limiting their post-high school options.*

Nebraska's graduation rate – both the state-reported and the independently-reported – demonstrates how the education system is not working for all students.

Graduation Rate (class of 2008)	State Reported <sup>iii</sup>	Independently Reported <sup>iv</sup>
	90%	77%

As of 2009, Nebraska had 5 “dropout factories” or high schools that graduate 60 percent or less of their students.<sup>v</sup>

Far too many students enter two- and four-year postsecondary institutions unprepared for college-level coursework.

- Among those Nebraska high school graduates who enter public college in the state, only 58% persist on their sophomore year at two-year institutions and 76% at four-year institutions.<sup>vi</sup>

Employers of graduates entering into the workforce directly after high school note gaps in their knowledge and skills:

- 41% of employers are dissatisfied with graduates' abilities.
- Only 18% believe that new graduates, with no further education beyond high school, have the skills necessary for advancement.<sup>vii</sup>

#### THE COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY AGENDA

*The best way to prepare students for life after high school is to ensure they graduate with a strong foundation in the core academic areas that will leave all doors open in the future.*

Over the past five years, states have driven the college- and career-ready agenda – a policy agenda that seeks to ensure all students graduate high school, and graduate ready for their next steps.

The momentum created by the states has been bolstered by the federal government's Race to the Top competition, which has further incentivized the adoption of common, college- and career-ready standards and assessments.

Support is very strong among voters for college- and career-ready policies, across demographic and party lines:

- *89% of voters agree that “to really get ahead in life a person needs at least some education beyond high school, whether that means university, community college, technical or vocational school.”*
- *83% of voters believe all students should “be pushed to take rigorous and broad academic requirements in high school to make sure they have as many options as possible upon graduation.”<sup>viii</sup>*

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### What Nebraska Has Accomplished To Date<sup>ix</sup>

- In 2009 Nebraska adopted academic standards in math and English aligned with college- and career-ready expectations.
- In 2009, Nebraska adopted graduation requirements aligned to the college- and career-ready academic standards for all students.

**Nebraska is one of only 21 states (including DC) with requirements at this level**

- Nebraska's longitudinal data system satisfies nine of the ten essential Data Quality Campaign elements, providing a foundation for strong and sound student-level data collection. Nebraska plan to build a P-20 longitudinal data system that matches student-level data across K-12 and postsecondary systems on a regular basis.
- While Nebraska has increased capacity to collect a range of college- and career-ready indicators, they will need to increase the use of those data to get a more complete picture of how their students are faring in K-12 and beyond.

### How Nebraska Can Further Advance the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

- ✓ ...Adopt and realize the promise of the Common Core State Standards by implementing them fully and successfully, taking into consideration the related curricular and policy changes.
- ✓ ... Administer assessments to all students that measure college- and career-ready content and can be used by postsecondary institutions to make placement decisions.
- ✓ ...Continue to make progress on the state's data collection efforts, particularly around making student data available to relevant stakeholders and linking K-12 and postsecondary student-level data.
- ✓ ...Re-examine the state's K-12 accountability system to determine how it can further reward measures of college and career readiness, in alignment with the state's standards and course requirements.

<sup>i</sup> Carnevale, Anthony P. and Donna Desrochers (2003). *Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform*, Education Testing Services. <http://www.learn2earn.org/For-Educators/Standards-for-What.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> National Skills Coalition <http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/fact-sheets/state-fact-sheets/>; National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, analysis of 2009 American Community Survey. [www.higheredinfo.org/](http://www.higheredinfo.org/)

<sup>iii</sup> 2009 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report, Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, [www.ccpe.state.ne.us/PublicDoc/CCPE/reports/progressReport/2009.pdf](http://www.ccpe.state.ne.us/PublicDoc/CCPE/reports/progressReport/2009.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Education Week Diplomas Count 2011, [www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2011/06/09/index.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2011/06/09/index.html)

<sup>v</sup> America's Promise Alliance (2011). Building a Grad Nation: March 2011 Update. [www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx](http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/Building-a-Grad-Nation.aspx)

<sup>vi</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (2008). *Retention Rates – First-Time College Freshmen Returning Their Second Year, Graduation Rates*. <http://www.higheredinfo.org>

<sup>vii</sup> Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies, *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* prepared for Achieve, Inc., 2005.

<sup>viii</sup> Achieve (2010). *Achieving the Possible: What Americans Think About the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*. [www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible](http://www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible)

<sup>ix</sup> Achieve (2011). *Closing the Expectations Gap 2011: 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers*. [www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011](http://www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2011)