

May 2011

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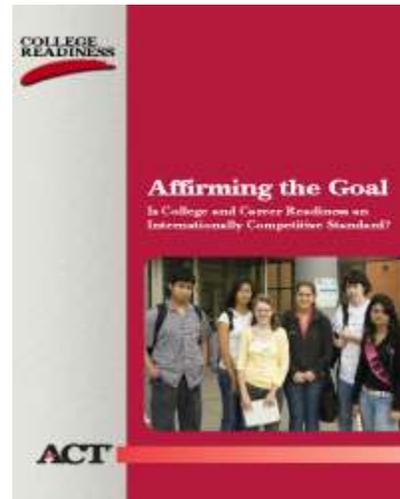
College and Career Readiness Here and Abroad

ACT's latest policy report [Affirming the Goal: Is College and Career Readiness an Internationally Competitive Standard?](#) shows that the nation's college and career readiness goal is not just ambitious, but attainable — and necessary if we want high school graduates to be able to compete with their global peers. In its report, ACT approximated the "college- and career-ready" line on the scale of PISA scores (an assessment of 15-year olds' literacy and problem solving skills) by linking the international assessment to scores on ACT's test for tenth-graders that indicates a

student's readiness for college and career. Only a small handful of countries have students already meeting or exceeding this college- and career-ready level. According to ACT, the results show that the performance standard of college and career readiness — and therefore the new Common Core State Standards, which were designed to help all U.S. students become ready for college and career — is internationally competitive, falling well within the range of the highest-performing countries on PISA reading and math.

Specifically, ACT found that the tenth-grade college and career readiness benchmark was significantly higher than the OECD average on PISA, and higher than the U.S. average on either test. In reading, for example, only Shanghai, Korea, Finland, and Hong Kong significantly surpassed the college readiness benchmark score. In mathematics, the U.S. lags even further behind the college and career readiness benchmark.

Research like this further supports the importance and value of rigorous, college- and career-ready standards that aim to prepare all students for life after high school and ensure our graduates are competitive with their international peers. This is precisely why international expectations played an important role in shaping the Common Core State Standards. The standards of many of the high-performing countries, including those listed above, informed the development of the Common Core, as did the frameworks for Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), in terms of their content, organization, focus and coherence.



Benchmarking activities done now, such as ACT's new report and a series of [briefs](#) Achieve developed that compare the new common standards to the expectations of high-performing countries, go a long way towards reaffirming the fact that the Common Core strongly compare to, and even build upon, the best benchmarks in the world.

This latest study confirms what we already know: too many American students are not performing at a college- and career-ready level. Yet, at the same time, it gives encouragement that the "college- and career-ready line" in the Common Core State Standards is drawn at the right place, and if met, would put American students near the top of the international pack.

The full report can be found [here](#), and a brief for state policymakers can be found [here](#). Achieve's resources and research around international benchmarking can be found [here](#). Both Achieve and ACT were involved in the development of the Common Core State Standards.

New from Achieve

PARCC Launches New Website

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) recently announced the launch of its new website. The website — www.parcconline.org — is meant to provide all interested parties with more information and updates on the progress of the 25-state PARCC consortium as it develops a next-generation common assessment system that will help ensure all students graduate from high school ready for college and careers. The website includes information on goals, governance structure, key stakeholders, and timeline as well as information on assessment design and implementation. It also features an "In the Classroom" section dedicated to the classroom teacher that focuses on the instructional resources being developed, as well as other instructional resources for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) being created by other organizations. Each of the 25 PARCC states has a page with information on the K-12 and postsecondary leaders managing the work in each state as well as information on each state's implementation plan.

State Longitudinal Data Systems Webinar

On Wednesday, June 29 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. (EDT), the Data Quality Campaign (DQC), of which Achieve is a managing partner, will host a webinar, "*Leveraging the Power of SLDS: Building Capacity to Turn Data into Useful Information.*" Transforming the robust data housed in current state longitudinal data systems (SLDSs) into useful information requires very different skill sets from those that have been employed to build the data systems over the past few years. To effectively use the data in the SLDSs, state education agencies face three key human capacity challenges. This webinar will include a discussion of ways to overcome these challenges and feature the collaborative effort between the state of Arkansas and Edvance Research. Register [here](#).

News Clips

1. **College Is Very Much Worth It**

Andrew J. Rotherham writes in *TIME* that going to college increases graduates' choices and job benefits. [More...](#)

2. **Michigan's Class of 2011 Prepared for the Future**

Implementing college- and career-ready standards was the right move, advocates say. Michigan students are required to take a college-prep curriculum, including geometry, algebra I and II, biology and chemistry or physics. [More...](#)

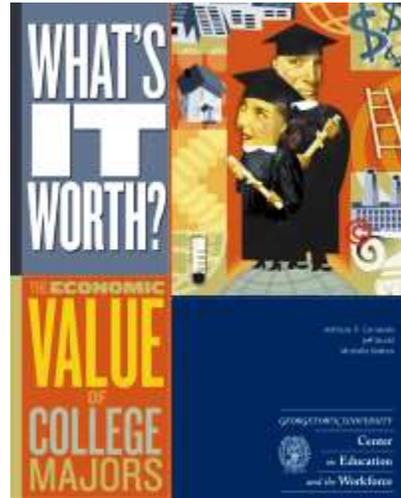
3. **Matt Gandal Leaves Achieve for Ed. Dept.**

Matt Gandal, who served as Achieve's Executive Vice President, has left Achieve after 14 years for new role at the U.S. Department of Education. [More...](#)

New Resources

- The National Center for Education Statistics just released [The Condition of Education 2011](#), an annual statistical portrait of education in America. The 2011 report contains 50 indicators on U.S. education, as well as a closer look at postsecondary education by institution level and control. The closer look examines data on differences in current conditions in postsecondary education between public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit institutions, and on changes in postsecondary enrollment patterns.

- On average, bachelor's degrees are worth the investment. However, a new study confirms that some undergraduate majors pay off a lot more than others. In fact, the difference in earnings potential between one major and another can amount to more than 300 percent. For the first time, the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce has analyzed the earnings disparities between college majors in a new report called [What's it Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors](#). Analyzing data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the full report contains detailed information about earnings broken down by 171 different undergraduate majors. The study also analyzes the likelihood that students in specific majors will go on to earn a graduate degree, and in which occupations and industries they can expect to work. Data are also available by gender and race/ethnicity, and demonstrate continued (self-)segregation by race and gender into low- and high-earning potential majors.
- An issue [brief](#) released by the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices provides states with ideas on how to fix failing schools and districts. At least 5,000 public schools, serving more than 3 million children, are considered failing in the United States as they have failed to meet their academic achievement targets for at least five consecutive years. *State Strategies for Fixing Failing Schools and Districts* looks at ways to cope with the underlying causes of failing schools including: weak leadership; inadequate skill levels among teachers; and insufficient, high-quality teaching materials.



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