

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: National Report Card on Higher Education
Date: October 7, 2002

Recommended Action:

Receive the report.

Executive Summary:

On October 2, 2002, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, a private, nonprofit organization, released its second biennial report, "Measuring Up 2002," that grades states on their performance in higher education. Its first such report was issued in 2000.

The report evaluated states using "A" through "F" grades in the areas of Preparation, Participation, Affordability, Completion, and Benefits. A sixth area, Student Learning, was not graded due to lack of relevant information from the states.

Iowa higher education, which includes all public and private postsecondary institutions in the state, was graded as follows:

- Preparation – B, the same grade Iowa received in the 2000 report. Iowa was ranked 18th in this category; among Midwestern states, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota and Wisconsin were ranked higher. Nineteen states earned grades of B+, B or B-.
- Participation – B+, a slight improvement from B in 2000. Iowa was ranked 9th; Midwestern states Illinois, Kansas and Nebraska were ranked higher. Sixteen states earned grades of B+, B or B-.
- Affordability – C, a decline from B in 2000. Iowa was ranked 11th, after Midwestern states Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Twelve states earned grades in the C range.
- Completion – A, a slight improvement from A- in 2000. Iowa was ranked 6th; the highest among Midwestern states. Eight states earned grades of A or A-.
- Benefits – C+, the same grade as in 2000. Iowa was ranked 21st, after Midwestern states Illinois and Minnesota and tied with North Dakota. Twenty-one states earned grades in the C range.

In Affordability, Iowa ranked among the best states for a family's ability to pay at public four-year universities — the Regent universities. Iowa also was a top-performing state in undergraduates' low reliance on debt to finance their higher education.

The state's lower grade in Affordability was attributed to the large share of family income needed, after financial aid, to attend private four-year institutions and to greater improvements in this area among other states.

The report's authors acknowledged, however, that the report is based on data from 2000 and prior, before revenue shortfalls led many states to implement deep budget cuts and steep tuition increases.

Iowa's lower grade in Benefits was due to the state's low economic benefits, the report stated. The proportion of Iowa residents with bachelor's degrees rose since the 2000 report, but remains only fair. The report placed Iowa among top-performing states in the percentage of adults demonstrating high-level quantitative literacy skills.

Strategic Plan:

The Board's strategic planning goal 2.1.0.0 requires that the Board annually assess educational opportunities, tuition policy, and financial aid policy to identify and to eliminate impediments to access and retention at Regent institutions. "Measuring Up 2002" indicates the Regent universities have succeeded in making a college education more accessible and affordable to more people. More than 70 percent of students enrolled at the Regent universities are residents of Iowa. And enrollment of non-traditional students in the universities for on-campus, distance education and non-credit programs is increasing.

In addition, the Regent universities' retention and graduate rates have contributed to the state's high level of full-time students who complete bachelor's degrees in six years or less.

However, the significant cuts in state funding for Regent institutions in the past two years may reduce Iowa's performance in higher education participation, completion and affordability. Clearly, a major priority for the future should be the restoration of basic state support for Regent universities in order to moderate future tuition increases and also to provide more state assistance for student financial aid.

Background:

Established in 1998, with offices in San Jose, CA, and Washington, D.C., the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education claims to promote public policies that enhance Americans' opportunities to pursue and achieve a high-quality education and training beyond high school. It receives continuing, core financial support from a consortium of national foundations that includes The Pew Charitable Trusts and The Ford Foundation.

The biennial series of 50-state report cards is based on quantitative measures of performance developed by its authors. The center created the series to encourage and support state leaders in expanding and improving college-level opportunity and effectiveness. The report asserts that "the prospects... of individuals, communities, states, and nations depend as never before on the availability and effectiveness" of postsecondary education and training, and "the primary public policy responsibility for American education resides with the states."

Comprehensive, individual profiles of each state, as well as brief "states-at-a-glance" comparisons, are featured in the report.

"Measuring Up 2002" was funded through grants from The Atlantic Philanthropies, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Ford Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The center has indicated that it will issue at least one more 50-state report card in 2004.

The report evaluated states using "A" through "F" grades in the following key areas:

Preparation:

How adequately are students in each state being prepared for education and training beyond high school?

High school completion – high school credential

K-12 course taking in math, science, algebra in 8th grade, and upper-level math in 12th grade

K-12 student achievement –proficiency in math, reading, science, writing, math proficiency among low-income, college entrance exams, and advanced placement exams

Participation:

Do state residents have sufficient opportunities to enroll in education and training beyond high school?

Young adults – high school to college rate and young adult enrollment

Working-age adults – enrollment of working adults ages 25-49

- Affordability:** How affordable is higher education for students and their families?
- Family ability to pay at community colleges, at public 4-year colleges, and at private 4-year colleges
 - Strategies for affordability – need-based financial aid and low-priced colleges
 - Reliance on loans – low student debt
- Completion:** Do students make progress toward and complete their certificates and degrees in a timely manner?
- Persistence – students returning at 2-year colleges and students returning at 4-year colleges
 - Completion – bachelor's degree completion within 5 years and within 6 years, and all degree completion
- Benefits:** What benefits does the state receive as a result of having a highly educated population?
- Educational achievement – adults with bachelor's degree or higher
 - Economic benefits – increased income from education, bachelor's degree or some college/associate's degree
 - Civic benefits – population voting and charitable contributions
 - Adult skill levels – quantitative literacy, prose literacy, and document literacy
- Learning:** What do we know about student learning as a result of education and training beyond high school?
- As in the 2000 report, all states lacked information on the education performance of college students that would permit systematic state or national comparisons. To help develop better measures of college-level learning, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education worked with government and education leaders in Kentucky to develop a prototype. The center plans to add additional states and information about student learning in future report cards.

Analysis:

“Measuring Up 2002,” like the 2000 report, claims that higher education opportunities are highly uneven across the states and mediocre in many areas. According to the report, no state merits straight A's in providing opportunities for education and training beyond high school. Further, one's geography, income and ethnicity continue to play too great a role in defining one's college opportunities. The report adds that America is not the world leader in providing college access or in college degree attainment.

Some highlights in the “Measuring Up 2002” report are:

- The largest gains since the 2000 report were in the first area, preparing young Americans to enroll and succeed in college. Still, course rigor and skill levels of students vary widely among the states.
- People in some states appear to have a much higher chance of going to college.
- Few states offer both low-priced colleges and significant financial aid for low-income students. In many states, tremendous gaps exist among income groups in ability to pay for college.
- Of the nation’s 13 million undergraduates, 40 percent attend part-time; one-third are non-white.
- The demand for higher levels of knowledge and skills, the report states, threatens to outpace supply as baby boomers retire and the demands for college-educated workers grow.

Iowa’s Grades:

In its press release for the state of Iowa, the center states that a “very high proportion of Iowa high school students go on to college right after high school,” 53 percent, and “a very high percentage complete degrees.” According to the release:

- Iowa has not improved on the high share of family income that the state’s poorest families need to pay for tuition at the state’s lowest-priced colleges, 16 percent, which is twice the share required of poor families in the best-performing states, 8 percent.
- Iowa is a top-performing state on the low average loan amount students borrow to attend college, \$2,933.
- Fifty-nine percent of Iowa’s full-time college students complete a bachelor’s degree within five years, compared to 66 percent in the top states, and Iowa is very near the top states in the proportion of full-time students who complete their bachelor’s degree within six years, 61 percent.

Iowa's grades, with accompanying quotes from the report, are:

Preparation:

B

“A fairly high percentage of high school students in Iowa take upper-level math courses and a very high percentage take upper-level science courses. The percentage of 8th graders who score well on national math assessments is very high. And the proportion of 12th graders who take and score well on college entrance exams is good, despite a slight drop.”

Participation: B+

“Iowa retains its top-performing standing in the proportion of high school students who go on to college immediately after high school. The percentage of young adults (ages 18 to 24) who enroll in college-level education remains high. Although the proportion of working-age adults (ages 25 to 49) who enroll in education or training beyond high school is fairly low, it has increased.”

Iowa was the third-best-performing state (with the highest score) in high school to college rate (score of 99).

Affordability: C

“Iowa compares well with the best-performing states in the share of family income needed, after financial aid, to attend the state’s public two- and four-year colleges and universities. However, families must pay a fair share of income to attend private four-year institutions.”

Iowa was the third-best-performing state in undergraduates’ low reliance on debt to finance their higher education (score of 100).

Completion: A

“A very high percentage of freshmen at four-year colleges and universities return for their sophomore year. A very large proportion of first-time, full-time students earn a bachelor’s degree within five years of finishing high school – an improvement since ‘Measuring Up 2000.’”

Benefits: C+

“The proportion of Iowa residents who have a bachelor’s degree has improved since ‘Measuring Up 2000,’ but remains fair. The state has low economic benefits. Iowa residents contribute substantially to the civic good, particularly as measured by the percentage who vote.”

Iowa was the fourth-best-performing state in the quantitative literacy (score of 98).


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Approved: 
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