

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: National Report Card on Higher Education
Date: December 4, 2000

Recommended Action:

Receive the report.

Executive Summary:

On November 30, 2000, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, a private organization, released a report entitled "Measuring Up 2000" that grades states on their performance in higher education.

The report evaluated states using "A" through "F" grades in the following key areas: Preparation, Participation, Affordability, Completion, and Benefits. A sixth area, student learning, was not graded because data was not available.

Iowa higher education, which includes all postsecondary institutions in the state (public and private), was graded as follows: Preparation - B, Participation - B, Affordability - B, Completion - A-, and Benefits - C+. In each of the categories, Iowa ranked best performing state in at least one subcategory. In the affordability category, Iowa ranked as the best state for a family's ability to pay at public 4-year universities — the Regent universities.

According to the report, Iowa's lower grade in Benefits is attributable to the lower number of adults in the state with a bachelor's degree and the lack of economic benefit from an increase in total personal income that would result from more people holding bachelor's degrees.

Background and Analysis:

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 quality higher education. It receives continuing, core financial support from a consortium of national foundations that includes The Pew Charitable Trusts and The Ford Foundation.

The report card, "Measuring Up 2000," is based on quantitative measures of performance developed by its authors. The report card indicates that the states should be graded on education and training through the bachelor's degree because providing opportunities for undergraduate education is a responsibility of state government.

“Measuring Up 2000” claims that the state one lives in, along with family resources and ethnicity, plays a major role in determining one’s college opportunities. Many states perform well in several areas, but no state receives straight A’s in providing opportunities for education and training beyond high school, according to the report card.

In its press release, North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt Jr., chair of the organization’s Board of Directors, was quoted as follows: “Despite the accomplishments of American higher education, its benefits are unevenly and often unfairly distributed and do not reflect the distribution of talent in America. ...Geography, wealth, income, and ethnicity still play far too great a role in determining the educational life chances of Americans.”

Some highlights in the “Measuring Up 2000” report are:

- Students in many states don’t have the opportunity to take challenging high school courses that could prepare them for college.
- People in some states appear to have a much higher chance of going to college.
- People in some states appear to have to pay a much higher share of their income to attend college.
- Students in some states have to borrow a lot more to attend college.
- Nationwide, about half (52%) of full-time freshmen at four-year colleges and universities earn a bachelor’s degree within five years.
- Income plays a key role in determining college opportunity.
- The distribution of grades is not explainable by differences in income or ethnic representation in the states. About 25% of the distribution of the grades is associated with factors like wealth and income. About 10% is associated with race and ethnicity.

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 – math course taking, science course taking, and algebra in 8th grade

K-12 student achievement – math proficiency, reading proficiency, writing proficiency, 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 – working-age adult enrollment

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 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 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

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?

All states lacked information on the education performance of college students that would permit systematic state or national comparisons. The report indicates that the incomplete grades highlight a gap in the nation's ability to say something meaningful about what students learn in college.

As the report was being completed, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported that, for the first time, three countries—Norway, Britain, and the Netherlands—have surpassed the United States in the proportion of young people who graduate from college.

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

Measuring Up 2000 was funded through grants from 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 Measuring Up 2000 will be updated in 2002 and 2004. It is likely that changes and adjustments will be made in the report based on this first year's experience.

Iowa's Grades

In its press release for the state of Iowa, the headlines read “Iowa's Performance Is Strong in Higher Education: New Report Card Compares Iowa to Top-Performing States.” According to the release:

- High school students in Iowa are taking the advanced courses they need to succeed in college and college students are earning a degree — 35% of high school students in Iowa take upper-level science, making the state a top performer on this measure.
- The state of Iowa is also a top performer on the percentage of high school graduates (54%) who go on to college right after high school.
- 58% of full-time college students in Iowa earn a degree within five years,

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

Preparation: B

"A very high percentage of Iowa's young adults earn a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) diploma by age 24. Iowa's 8th graders score very well on national assessments in math, indicating that they are well prepared to succeed in challenging high school math courses, and a very large percentage of high school students take upper-level science. Also, a very high proportion of Iowa's 11th and 12th graders perform well on college entrance exams."

Iowa was the best performing state (with the highest score) in science course taking (score of 95) and math proficiency (score of 97).

Participation: B

"Iowa is a top performer on the percentage of students who go on to college immediately after high school, and a fairly large proportion of the state's young adults (ages 18 to 24) are enrolled in postsecondary education or training. However, a low percentage of the state's working-age adults (ages 25 to 44) are enrolled in college-level education or training."

Iowa was the best performing state (with the highest score) in high school to college rate (score of 101).

Affordability: B

"Iowa compares very well to top-performing states on the share of family income required, after financial aid, to attend its public two- and four-year colleges and universities, which enroll 70% of the state's students. In addition, students in the state take on lower levels of debt to pay for their educational expenses than do students in most states. However, Iowa makes a comparatively limited investment in financial aid for low-income students and families."

Iowa was the best performing state in the family ability to pay at public 4-year colleges (score of 100).

Completion: A-

"A very high percentage of freshmen at Iowa's public and private four-year colleges and universities return for their sophomore year. A large proportion of first-time, full-time college students receive a bachelor's degree within five years of enrolling. And a very high proportion of students complete certificates and degrees relative to the number enrolled."

Iowa was the best performing state in all degree completions (score of 96).

Benefits: C+

"Only a fair proportion of Iowa residents have a bachelor's degree and this impairs the state economically. A high proportion of Iowa's adults perform well on national assessments of high-level literacy, particularly in quantitative literacy."

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

Learning: I

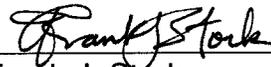
"Like other states, Iowa lacks information on the educational performance of college students that would permit systematic state or national comparisons."

The Board Office will review the report in more detail and may provide further analysis of its findings to the Board.



Pamela M. Elliott

Approved:



Frank J. Stork