

MEASURING UP

2008

**THE NATIONAL REPORT CARD
ON HIGHER EDUCATION**



**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY AND
HIGHER EDUCATION**



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The *Measuring Up 2008* national and state report cards on higher education were made possible by grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education promotes public policies that enhance Americans' opportunities to pursue and achieve high-quality education and training beyond high school. Established in 1998 by a consortium of national foundations, the National Center is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that is not affiliated with any institution of higher education or government agency. It conducts research and analyses of policy issues facing the states and the nation with a particular focus on opportunity and achievement in higher education — including two- and four-year, public and private, for-profit and nonprofit institutions. The National Center communicates findings and recommendations, including information on state and national performance of American higher education, to the public, to civic, business, and higher education leaders, and to state and federal policymakers.

The National Center is solely responsible for *Measuring Up 2008*.

For further information about the National Center and its publications, visit www.highereducation.org.

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CONTENTS

Foreword , by Governor James. B. Hunt Jr., Chairman of the National Center's Board of Directors	4
The 2008 National Report Card: Modest Improvements, Persistent Disparities, Eroding Global Competitiveness , by Patrick M. Callan, President of the National Center	5
The National Picture: 2008 Snapshot	10
Improvements and Declines	13
State Grades 2008	18
State Change Over Time on Key Indicators	19
The Information Gap: Much Talk, Little Progress , by Dennis P. Jones, President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems	20
Stuck on Student Learning , by Peter T. Ewell, Vice President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems	23
Facing the Nation: The Role of College Leaders in Higher Education Policy , by David W. Breneman, Chair of the <i>Measuring Up 2008</i> National Advisory Group	25
What's New in <i>Measuring Up 2008</i>?	27
Questions and Answers about <i>Measuring Up 2008</i>	28
How We Grade States and How We Measure Change Over Time	30
Acknowledgements	31



Foreword

By Governor James B. Hunt Jr.

Since 2000, the *Measuring Up* report cards have evaluated the progress of the nation and all 50 states in providing Americans with education and training beyond high school through the bachelor's degree. In their totality, the five editions of the national and state report cards constitute the most extensive assessment ever of the educational performance of American higher education. Our purpose in the *Measuring Up* series is to assist the nation and the states in improving higher education opportunity and effectiveness.

As in the earlier editions, *Measuring Up 2008* focuses exclusively on results, outcomes, and improvement. State performance is evaluated, compared, and graded in six key areas:

- **Preparation for college:** How well are high school students prepared to enroll in higher education and succeed in college-level courses?
- **Participation:** Do young people and working-age adults have access to opportunities for education and training beyond high school?
- **Affordability:** How difficult is it to pay for college when family income, the cost of attending college, and student financial aid are taken into account?
- **Completion:** Do students persist in and complete certificate and degree programs in college?
- **Benefits:** How do college-educated and trained residents contribute to the economic and civic well-being of each state?
- **Learning:** How do college-educated residents perform on a variety of measures of knowledge and skills?

In assessing state and national progress in these areas, *Measuring Up* places the performance of American higher education in a global perspective by incorporating international comparisons wherever possible.

The purpose of providing grades, comparisons, and indicators is to encourage each state to measure its own higher education outcomes against the best performance nationally and internationally. As in past editions of *Measuring Up*, the grades compare each state against benchmarks established by the best-performing states in each area in the current year. The grades give each state and the nation "real world" standards of comparison. In addition, selected indicators in the state report cards track improvement over time by comparing the performance of each state against its own past performance.

As a governor and a leader and participant in educational reform at all levels, I have learned that good intentions are not enough. It is critical that high aspirations for educational improvement be reinforced by monitoring key indicators of progress. The public, education leaders, elected officials, and business and civic leaders must know where we are making headway, where we are stalled, and where we are regressing. Each state's education system is unique, of course. But every state, I believe, can benefit from using *Measuring Up* to monitor its higher education performance in relation to other states, as reflected in grades, and to assess progress as reflected in the change-over-time indicators.

This edition of *Measuring Up* highlights the uneven distribution of higher education opportunity and achievement in the United States. Family wealth and income, race and ethnicity, and geography play too great a role in determining which Americans receive a high school education that prepares them for college, which ones enroll in college, and which ones complete certificate or degree programs. Demographic changes and the pressures of a knowledge-based global economy are already transforming our nation and our states. In facing these early challenges of the 21st century, we must address our educational disparities if we are to achieve a workforce that is competitive internationally and a citizenry that can enhance our democratic institutions.

The core message of *Measuring Up 2008* is that despite our historical successes in higher education, the preeminence of many of our colleges and universities, and some examples of improvement in this decade, our higher education performance is not commensurate with the current needs of our society and our economy. Our nation and our states can do better. As we have done many times in this nation's history, we must reach higher. We must educate more young people and adults, so that more Americans have the college-level knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

The 2008 National Report Card: Modest Improvements, Persistent Disparities, Eroding Global Competitiveness

By Patrick M. Callan

Measuring Up 2008 is the most recent in the series of national and state-by-state report cards for higher education that was inaugurated in 2000. The key findings this year reveal that the nation and most of the 50 states are making some advances in preparing students for college and providing them with access to higher education. However, other nations are advancing more quickly than the United States; we continue to slip behind other countries in improving college opportunities for our residents. In addition, large disparities in higher education performance by race/ethnicity, by income, and by state limit our nation's ability to advance the educational attainment of our workforce and citizenry — and thereby remain competitive globally.

College Preparation

Young Americans who graduate from high school on time are now more likely to take courses that prepare them for college and to enroll in college, compared with earlier this decade or in the 1990s. But far too many graduates leave high school unprepared to succeed in college-level courses and need remediation when they enroll. In addition, larger proportions than in the past fail to graduate from high school; some eventually receive alternative high school certification, principally the GED, but they do not enroll in college in large numbers. The reduced high school graduation rate decreases the pool of potential college graduates and college-educated workers.

Access to College

The likelihood that a high school freshman will enroll in college by age 19 has improved modestly in this decade, from 39% to 42%, and the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college has grown even more modestly. Meanwhile, the enrollment of working-age adults in college-level education or training has been declining since the early 1990s. Overall, the *Measuring Up* indicators show that access to college is fairly flat in the United States, with mostly small improvements in some states and declines in others.

College Graduation

For students who enroll in college, rates of completion of certificate, associate, and baccalaureate programs are poor and have improved only slightly. These low college completion rates — as with the declining rates of high school completion — are depriving the nation of college-educated and trained workers needed to keep the American workforce competitive globally.

International Comparisons

The United States' world leadership in college access has eroded steadily, as reflected in the international comparisons of the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college (see Figure 1). In college completion, which has never been a strength of American higher education, the U.S. ranks 15th among 29 countries compared (see Figure 2). The U.S. adult population ages 35 and older still ranks among the world leaders in the percentage who have college degrees — reflecting the educational progress of earlier times (see Figure 3). Among 25- to 34-year-olds, however, the U.S. population has slipped to 10th in the percentage who have an associate degree or higher (see Figure 4). This relative erosion of our national “educational capital” reflects the lack of significant improvement in the rates of college participation and completion in recent years.



Figure 1: The U.S. leadership in college enrollment has slipped.

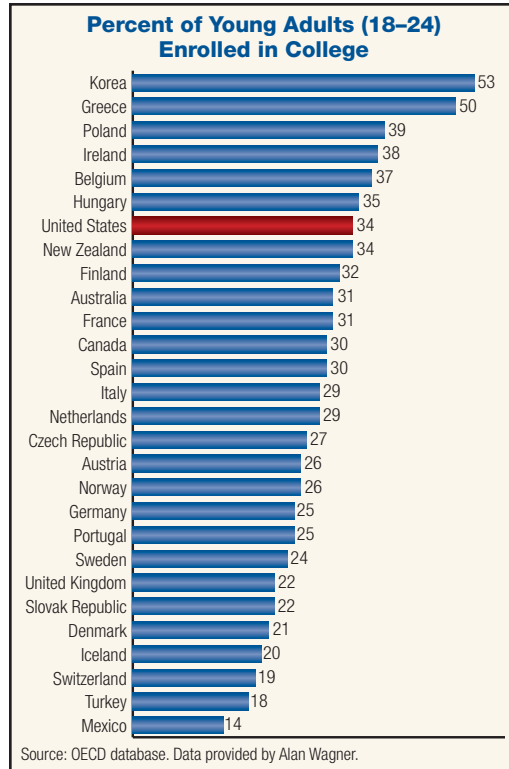


Figure 2: College completion has never been a U.S. strength.

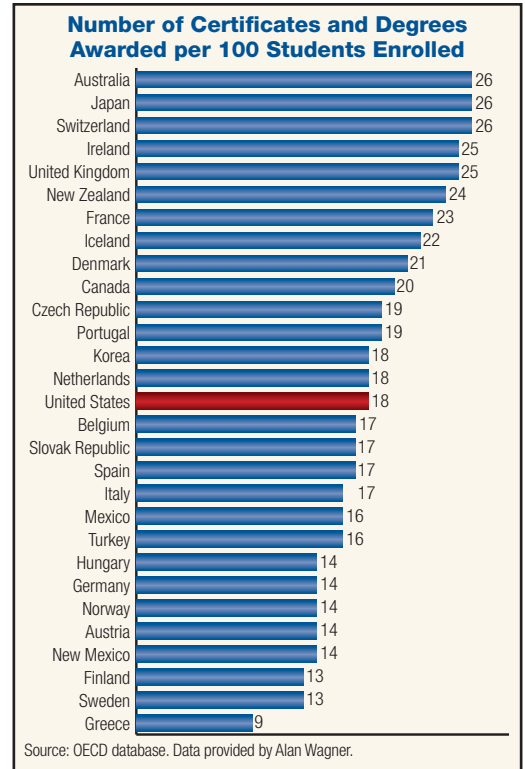


Figure 3: Educational level of older Americans reflects educational progress of earlier times.

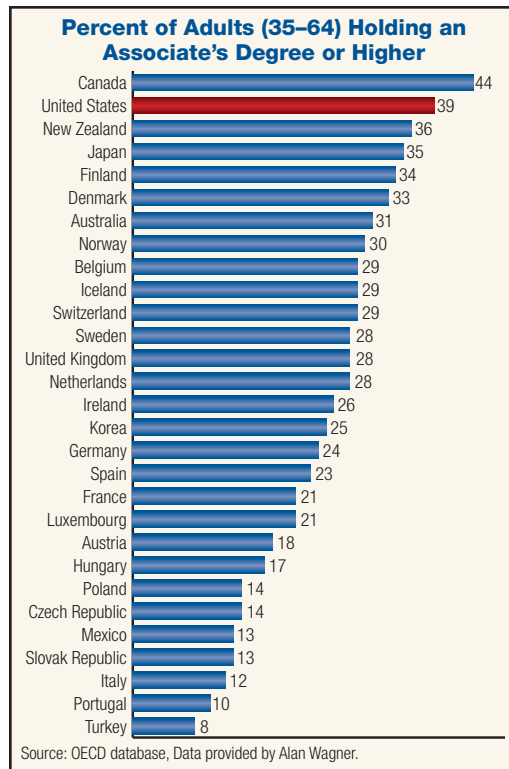
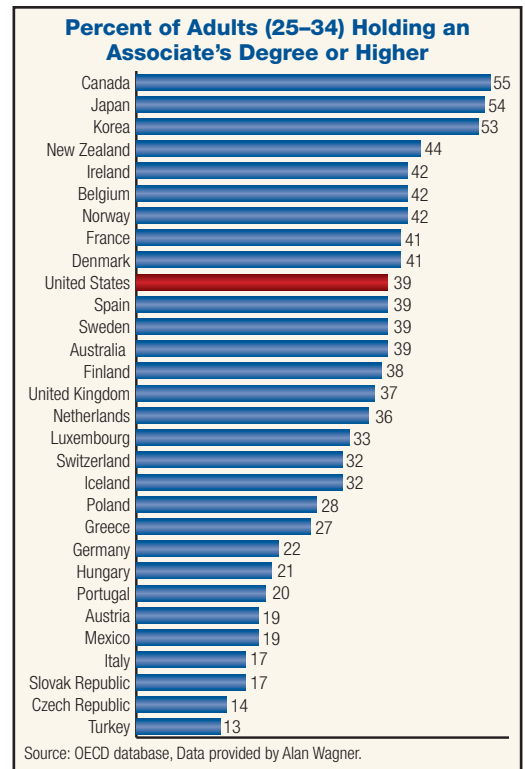


Figure 4: Educational level of younger American adults has slipped.



These cross-national comparisons place the nation's higher education performance in a global context and reflect the gaps that have opened between the United States and other nations. These disparities undermine our national value of individual opportunity and our collective capacity to succeed in the knowledge-based global economy. Addressing these disparities is critical because:

- Education and training beyond high school is a prerequisite for employment that supports a middle-class life. This is a reality for most Americans.
- Seventy-eight million Americans are reaching or approaching retirement age, and this is the best-educated generation in the United States — both currently and historically.
- As the nation's demography changes, large proportions of the younger generations are among those who are least well-served by the U.S. system of education currently: those whose educational opportunity and attainment reflect the disadvantages of race, income, and geography.

Persistent Disparities

To make significant headway in increasing the educational attainment of its population and thereby its comparative standing internationally, the United States must address disparities in educational opportunity and achievement among Americans. These persistent gaps must be closed if the United States is to meet its workforce needs and compete globally.

First, the high school graduation rate (the percentage of ninth graders who complete a standard high school diploma in four years) has decreased for all racial and ethnic groups over the past two decades, and differences between racial and ethnic groups persist. By the middle of this decade:

- the national on-time high school graduation rate was 77.5%,
- the rate for African Americans was 69.1%, and
- the rate for Hispanics was 72.3%.¹

Meanwhile, a growing number of high school students are taking longer to complete or are leaving high school without a standard diploma; some who drop out earn GEDs but are less likely to enroll in any form of postsecondary education and those who do enroll are less likely to complete a certificate or degree.

In addition, disparities in college access are closely linked to race/ethnicity and income. While college attendance has increased for all groups over the past three decades, gaps in enrollment among racial/ethnic groups have not diminished. For high school graduates, 73% of whites, 56% of blacks, and 58% of Hispanics enroll in college the next fall.² In terms of family income, 91% of high school students from families in the highest income group (above \$100,000) enroll in college. The enrollment rate for student from middle-income families (from \$50,001 to \$100,000) is 78% and for those in the lowest income group (\$20,000 and below) the rate is 52%.³

The racial and ethnic disparities that exist in preparation for and access to college are also found in college completion rates. For example, 59% of white students complete a bachelor's degree within six years of enrolling in college. In contrast, 47% of Hispanic students, 41% of African Americans, and 39% of Native American students complete a bachelor's degree within six years.

Finally, the state-by-state variation in educational performance represents another source of disparity and inequity for Americans. As reflected in the *Measuring Up* state report cards and grades, the likelihood of graduating from high school prepared for higher education, enrolling in college, and graduating from an affordable college or university differs enormously by state of residence. Here are some examples:

- High school freshmen in California, compared with their peers in Massachusetts, are 17% less likely to enroll in college by age 19. High school freshmen in Pennsylvania are 12% less likely to enroll than those in South Carolina or Utah.
- Half of young adults (ages 18 to 24) are enrolled in college in Rhode Island, while only 18% are in Alaska. Young adults are 15% more likely to be enrolled in college in Iowa than in Georgia, and 11% more likely to be enrolled in Massachusetts than in Texas.

Given our relative decline internationally and the gaps in higher education performance within our borders, no state can afford to maintain the status quo. As *Measuring Up 2008* reveals, even the best-performing states have gaps in performance they need to — and can — address. Narrowing those gaps will improve educational and economic opportunity in those states and for the nation as a whole.

Substantial gaps in performance persist by racial/ethnic group and by state.

18- to 24-Year-Olds with a High School Credential

	Whites	Blacks
Illinois	95%	82%
Kansas	93%	79%
Michigan	91%	80%
New York	95%	85%

	Whites	Hispanics
Arizona	93%	69%
California	95%	75%
North Carolina	92%	56%
Texas	93%	74%

18- to 24-Year-Olds Enrolled in College

	Whites	Blacks
Connecticut	50%	34%
Illinois	45%	29%
New Jersey	47%	32%
New York	50%	34%

	Whites	Hispanics
Arizona	40%	18%
California	45%	27%
North Carolina	41%	12%
Texas	39%	24%
Utah	45%	16%

	Whites	Native Americans
Washington	36%	13%
Alaska	33%	11%
Arizona	40%	18%

First-time, Full-time Students Completing a Bachelor's Degree within Six Years of College Entrance

	Whites	Blacks
Delaware	73%	41%
Illinois	65%	34%
Maryland	73%	42%
Michigan	58%	32%

	Whites	Hispanics
Illinois	65%	45%
New Jersey	66%	49%
New York	63%	43%
Texas	56%	38%

	Whites	Native Americans
New Mexico	47%	25%
North Dakota	48%	17%
Washington	65%	41%

Source: *Measuring Up 2008*.

Dimensions of the National Deterioration of College Affordability

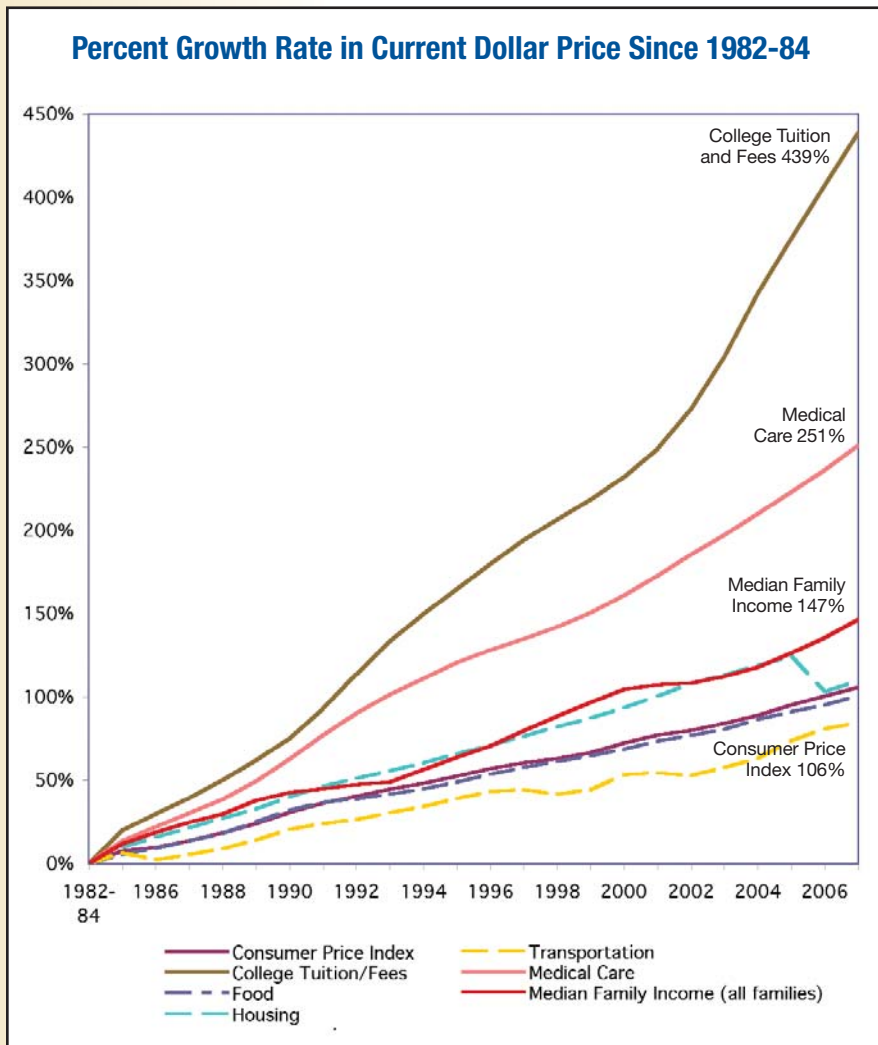
The deterioration of college affordability throughout the United States has contributed to the disparities in higher education opportunity and attainment. There are several dimensions to this national and state problem.

First, college tuition continues to outpace family income and the price of other necessities, such as medical care, food, and housing (see Figure 5). Whatever the causes of these tuition increases, the continuation of trends of the last quarter century would place higher education beyond the reach of most Americans and would greatly exacerbate the debt burdens of those who do enroll.

Figure 5: Increases in college tuition have outpaced price increases in other sectors of the economy.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers. Median Family Income is from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, and American Community Survey.

Notes: Growth rate is calculated from a baseline average of 1982, 1983, and 1984. Data are from 1982 to 2007. All industries, except median family income, are components of the CPI.



Second, the erosion of college affordability has been exacerbated not only by increased tuition, but also by relatively flat or declining family incomes. As a result of these trends, the financial burden of paying for college costs has increased substantially, particularly for low- and middle-income families, even when scholarships and grants are taken into account (see Table 1).

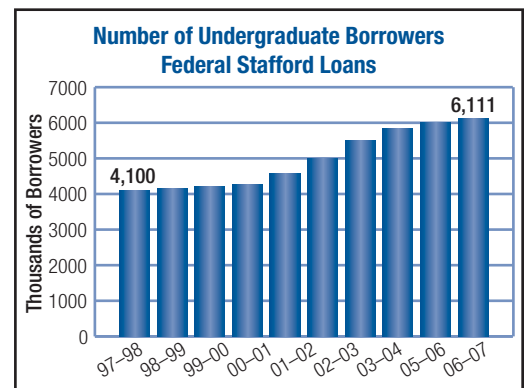
Table 1: The burden of paying for college has increased for all families, but has increased more for middle- and low-income families.

Net College Costs* as a Percent of Median Family Income			
At public four-year colleges and universities	1999-00	2007-08	% pts increased
Lowest income quintile	39%	55%	16%
Lower-middle income quintile	23%	33%	10%
Middle income quintile	18%	25%	7%
Upper-middle income quintile	12%	16%	4%
Highest Income quintile	7%	9%	3%
At public two-year colleges			
Lowest income quintile	40%	49%	9%
Lower-middle income quintile	22%	29%	7%
Middle income quintile	15%	20%	5%
Upper-middle income quintile	10%	13%	3%
Highest Income quintile	6%	7%	2%

* Net college costs equal tuition, room, and board, minus financial aid. The numbers may not add exactly due to rounding. Source: *Measuring Up 2008*.

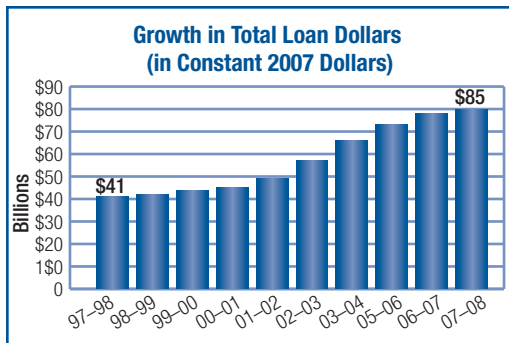
Third, students who do enroll in college are taking on more debt to maintain their college access. More students are borrowing (see Figure 6), and they are borrowing more. Over the last decade, student borrowing has more than doubled (see Figure 7).

Figure 6: More students are borrowing.



Source: The College Board, *Trends in Student Aid 2008*.

Figure 7: Student borrowing has more than doubled.



Source: The College Board, Trends in Student Aid 2008.

Another dimension of the problem of college affordability involves the financial aid priorities of colleges and universities, which are not in synch with public policy priorities. Currently, students from middle- and upper-income families receive larger grants from colleges and universities than students from low-income families receive (see Table 2).

Table 2: Compared with middle- and upper-income families, low-income families receive lower grants from colleges and universities.

Full-time Dependent Undergraduates Receiving Financial Grant Aid, By Income (2003-04)						
Provider	Federal Government		State Government		Institutions	
Parental Income (2002)	% receiving grant aid	Average Award	% receiving grant aid	Average Award	% receiving grant aid	Average Award
Below \$20,000	73%	\$4,000	36%	\$2,900	36%	\$4,700
\$20,000-\$39,999	63%	\$2,900	38%	\$2,700	40%	\$5,000
\$40,000-\$59,999	22%	\$1,700	28%	\$2,300	35%	\$5,500
\$60,000-\$79,999	4%	\$1,500	19%	\$2,000	34%	\$5,700
\$80,000-\$99,999	1%	\$2,300	14%	\$2,100	34%	\$6,100
\$100,000 or more	1%	\$1,700	8%	\$2,400	29%	\$6,200

Source: NCES (2005), "2003-04 NPSAS: Student Financial Aid Estimates for 2003-04."

Conclusion

Measuring Up 2008 identifies clearly the key areas of improvement and decline in higher education performance in the United States. States have made some modest advances, but these improvements are overshadowed by larger gains by other countries, and by the deterioration of college affordability throughout the United States. The relative erosion of our national "educational capital" has occurred at a time when we need more people to be college educated and trained because of Baby Boomer retirements and rising skill requirements for new and existing jobs.

Meanwhile, states are grappling with substantial budget shortfalls. In this fiscal cycle, state leaders face a crucial choice in determining state policy for higher education. They can respond to their current budget crises in the usual patterns of the past, by allowing tuition and student aid policy to play second fiddle to institutional finance. States that select this course will most likely see

precipitous tuition increases, cuts in student financial aid, and drops in college access. Further, if states take this path in being passive and complicit in allowing the brunt of the financial distress to be passed to students and families, then our national and state gaps in college access and completion will worsen, and college affordability will continue to deteriorate.

But states have another option: to establish state policies for tuition and student aid that balance the financial burden for higher education among states, the institutions of higher education, and students and families. This is both a short- and long-term strategy that makes state policy more transparent, grounds it in the needs and financial circumstances of state residents, establishes college affordability as a priority, protects educational opportunity, and in the process helps to meet the needs of states and the nation for a well-educated workforce and citizenry.

1 James J. Heckman and Paul A. LaFontaine, "The American High School Graduation Rate: Trends and Levels," Institute for the Study of Labor, *IZA Discussion Paper Series*, No. 3216 (December 2007). Table 1, p. 42.

2 Snyder, T.D., Dillow, S.A., and Hoffman, C.M. (2008). *Digest of Education Statistics 2007* (NCES 2008-022). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Table 192, p. 284-285.

3 Bozick, R., and Lauff, E. (2007). *Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002): A First Look at the Initial Postsecondary Experiences of the Sophomore Class of 2002* (NCES 2008-308). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Table 6, p. 16.

The National Picture: 2008 Snapshot Preparation

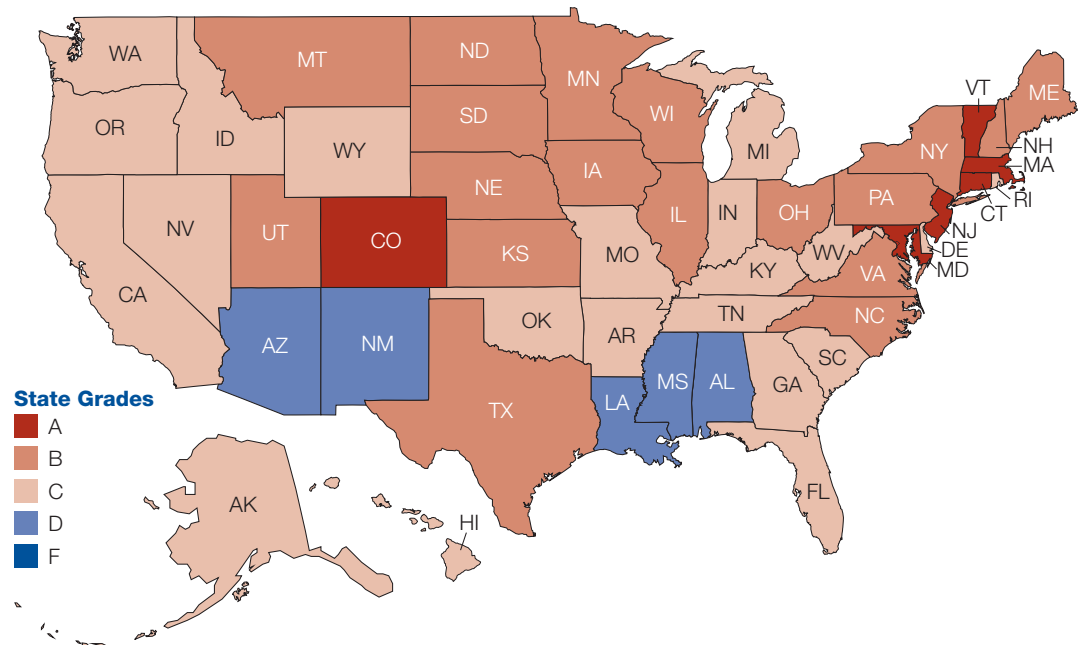
Preparation

High School Completion
High School Credential

K-12 Coursetaking
Math Course Taking
Science Course Taking
Algebra in 8th Grade

K-12 Student Achievement
Math Proficiency
Reading Proficiency
Science Proficiency
Writing Proficiency
Math Proficiency among
Low-Income
College Entrance Exams
Advanced Placement Exams

Teacher Quality
Students Taught by Qualified
Teachers



A Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont. **B** Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin. **C** Alaska, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming. **D** Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico. **F** None.

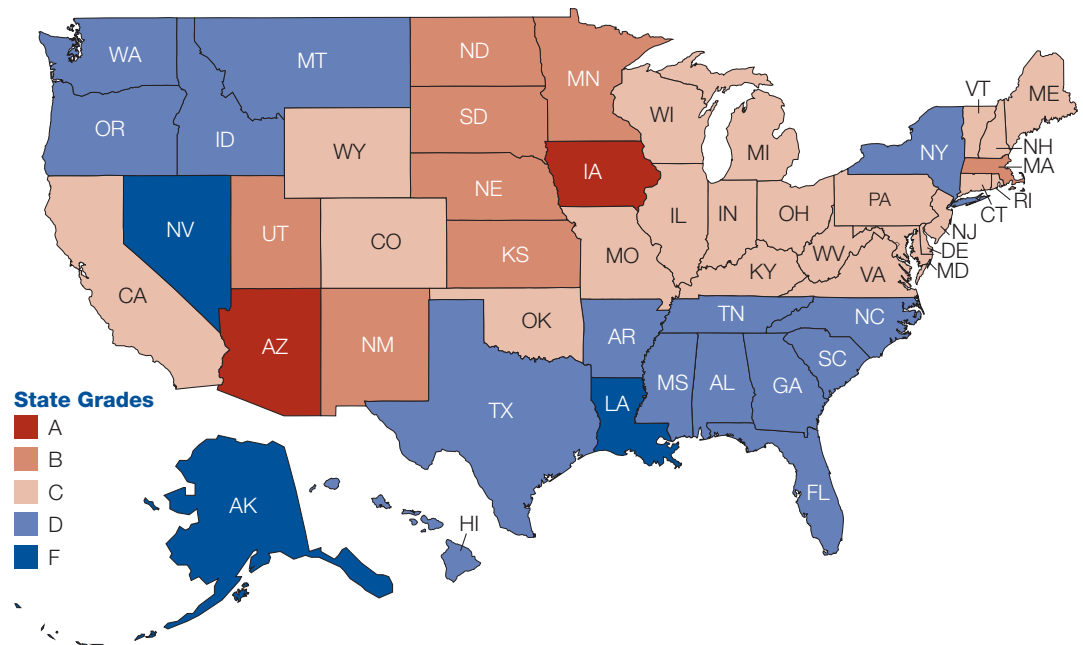
Massachusetts is the top-performing state in preparation.

Participation

Participation

Young Adults
Chance for College
Young Adult Enrollment

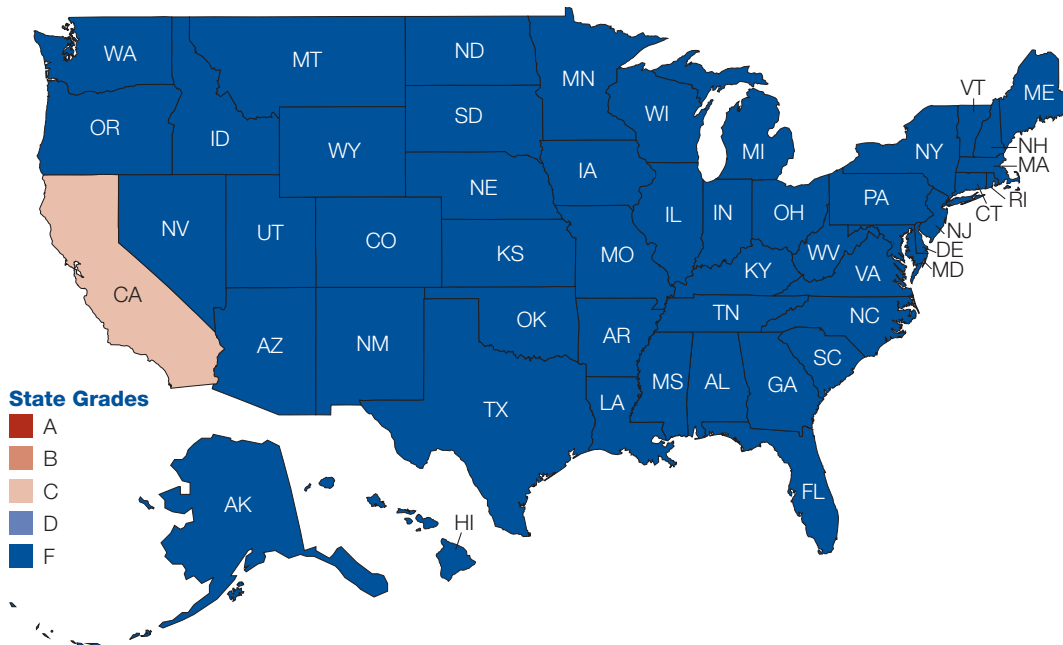
Working-Age Adults
Working-Age Adult Enrollment



A Arizona, Iowa. **B** Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah. **C** California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. **D** Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Mississippi, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington. **F** Alaska, Louisiana, Nevada.

Iowa is the top-performing state in participation.

Affordability



C California. **F** Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

California is the top-performing state in affordability.

Affordability

Family Ability to Pay

At Community Colleges
At Public 4-Year Colleges
At Private 4-Year Colleges

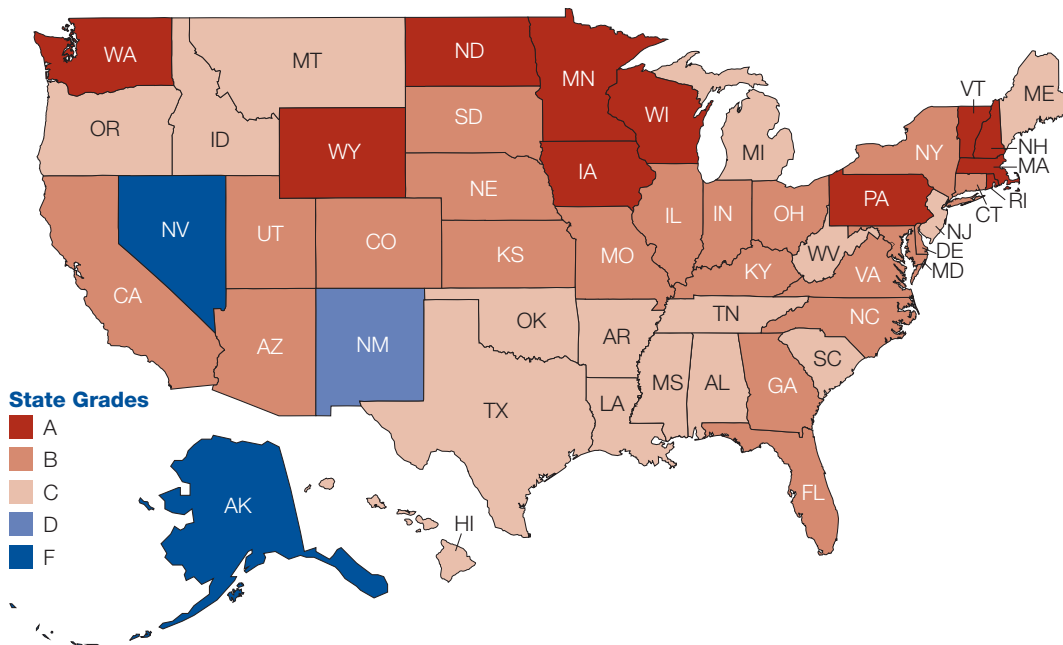
Strategies for Affordability

Need-Based Financial Aid
Low-Priced Colleges

Reliance on Loans

Low Student Debt

Completion



A Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming. **B** Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia. **C** Alabama, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia. **D** New Mexico. **F** Alaska, Nevada.

Iowa is the top-performing state in completion.

Completion

Persistence

Students Returning at 2-Year
Colleges
Students Returning at 4-Year
Colleges

Completion

Bachelor's Degree Completion
in 6 Years
All Degree Completions
per 100 Students
All Degree Completions per
1,000 Adults with No Degree

Benefits

Benefits

Educational Achievement

Adults with Associate's Degree or Higher
Adults with Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Economic Benefits

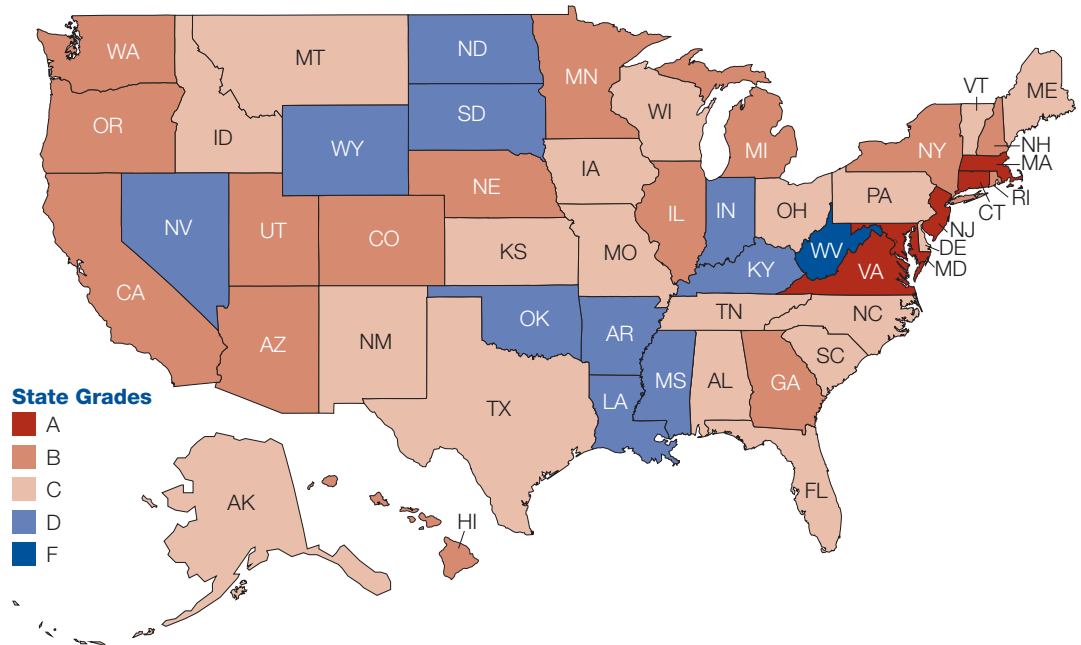
Increased Income from Some College
Increased Income from Bachelor's Degree

Civic Benefits

Population Voting
Charitable Contributions
Volunteering

Adult Skill Levels

Quantitative Literacy
Prose Literacy
Document Literacy



State Grades

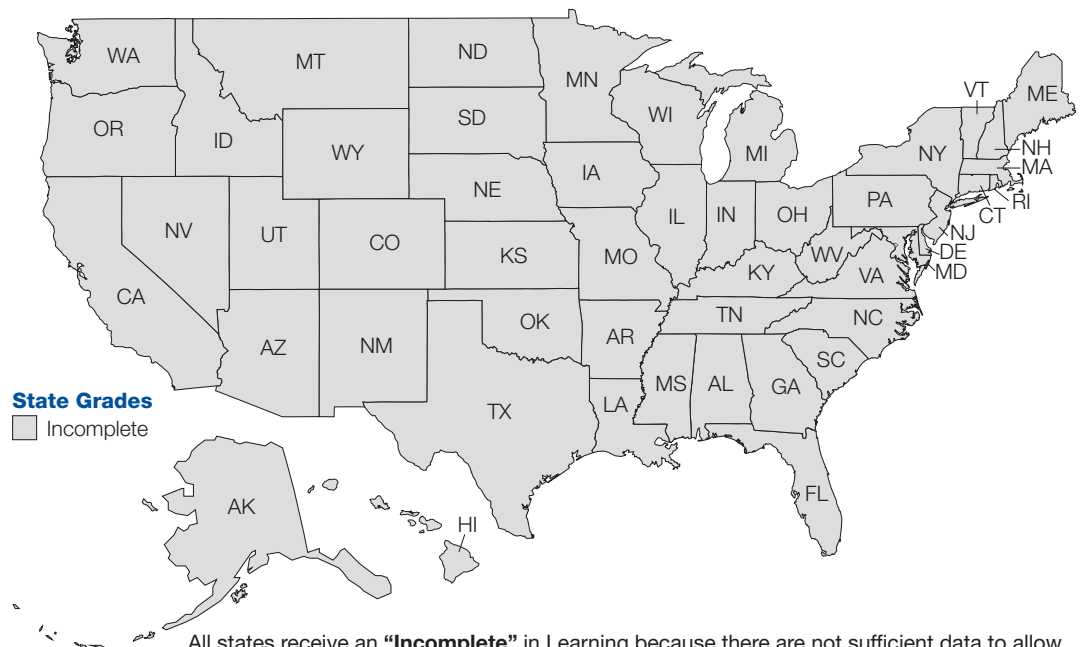
- A
- B
- C
- D
- F

A Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia. **B** Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington. **C** Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin. **D** Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wyoming. **F** West Virginia.

Maryland is the top-performing state in benefits.

Learning

Learning



State Grades

- Incomplete

All states receive an "Incomplete" in Learning because there are not sufficient data to allow meaningful state-by-state comparisons.

Improvements and Declines*

Preparation

Since the early 1990s, most states have improved in many areas of preparing students for college, including increasing the percentage of eighth graders scoring well on national math, science, and writing exams. However, not all states have improved on these national exams, and many states have declined on the national reading tests. In addition, improvement has not occurred in other important areas, such as the percentage of young adults graduating from high school within four years. The nation continues to experience disparities in educational performance by race/ethnicity and by state of residence.

Key Indicator: Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds with a high school credential



34 states improved or stayed the same on the key indicator



16 states declined on the key indicator

Other Improvements

9th to 12th graders taking at least one upper-level science course

Texas	20% to 56%
West Virginia	24% to 46%
South Carolina	21% to 36%
Iowa	28% to 47%

8th graders scoring at or above “proficient” on the national assessment in math

North Carolina	12% to 34%
Louisiana	7% to 19%
Arkansas	10% to 24%
Mississippi	6% to 14%
Massachusetts	23% to 51%
South Carolina	15% to 32%

8th graders scoring at or above “proficient” on the national assessment in science

Louisiana	13% to 19%
Delaware	21% to 29%
South Carolina	17% to 23%
Kentucky	23% to 31%

Low-income 8th graders scoring at or above “proficient” on the national assessment in math

Georgia	3% to 12%
Kentucky	4% to 15%
Louisiana	3% to 11%
South Carolina	5% to 18%
Massachusetts	7% to 25%
Mississippi	2% to 7%
Texas	6% to 21%

Number of scores in the top 20% nationally on SAT/ACT college entrance exams per 1,000 high school graduates

South Carolina	67 to 152
Massachusetts	138 to 263
Vermont	114 to 216
Georgia	94 to 177
West Virginia	84 to 157

Number of scores that are 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement subject test per 1,000 high school juniors and seniors

South Dakota	14 to 108
Arkansas	18 to 99
North Dakota	14 to 72
Minnesota	31 to 137
Wisconsin	42 to 164

Declines

8th graders scoring at or above “proficient” on the national assessment in reading

New Mexico	24% to 17%
West Virginia	27% to 23%
Arizona	28% to 24%
Connecticut	42% to 37%
Maine	42% to 37%

* These indicators enable states to compare their current performance with past performance.

Participation

The nation as a whole has made progress since the early 1990s in enrolling young adults (ages 18 to 24) in education or training beyond high school. During this time, 35 states increased the likelihood of ninth graders enrolling in college within four years. However, most states declined in enrolling working-age adults in college-level education or training. Furthermore, participation in higher education varies by race/ethnicity and by state of residence.

Key Indicator: Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college



43 states improved or stayed the same on the key indicator



7 states declined on the key indicator

Improvements

Likelihood of high school freshmen enrolling in college within four years

South Carolina	25% to 36%
South Dakota	44% to 59%
Tennessee	32% to 42%
Louisiana	29% to 38%

Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college

Michigan	25% to 37%
Maine	25% to 35%
New York	25% to 34%
Massachusetts	29% to 41%
Arkansas	24% to 32%

Declines

Percentage of 25- to 49-year-olds (without a bachelor's degree or higher) enrolled in higher education

Connecticut	8.2% to 3.9%
New Hampshire	7.1% to 3.4%
Rhode Island	9.3% to 4.8%
Massachusetts	8.2% to 4.8%
Colorado	12.2% to 7.3%
Nebraska	10.5% to 6.3%

Affordability

The nation's colleges and universities have become less affordable for students and their families since the early 1990s. This year continues the trend in deteriorating college affordability in the majority of states. Although many states increased their investment in need-based financial aid, tuition increases outpaced growth in financial aid. In all but two states, the percentage of family income, after financial aid, needed to pay for a public four-year college has increased since 2000. On average, students from working and poor families must pay 40% of family income to enroll in public four-year colleges. Students from middle-income families and upper-income families must pay 25% and 13% of family income, respectively, to enroll in public four-year colleges.

Key Indicator: Percentage of income (average of all income groups) needed to pay for college expenses at public four-year institutions



2 states improved or stayed the same on the key indicator



48 states declined on the key indicator

Declines in Family Ability to Pay*

Percentage of income needed to pay for college expenses minus financial aid at community colleges

North Dakota	16% to 27%
West Virginia	20% to 29%
Massachusetts	18% to 26%
Florida	18% to 25%
Texas	15% to 21%
Illinois	19% to 24%
Washington	20% to 25%
Arizona	17% to 21%

Percentage of income needed to pay for college expenses minus financial aid at public four-year institutions

Illinois	19% to 35%
New Jersey	19% to 34%
Delaware	23% to 37%
Minnesota	17% to 30%
Oklahoma	12% to 25%
Pennsylvania	29% to 41%

Percentage of income needed to pay for college expenses minus financial aid at private four-year institutions

Arizona	50% to 79%
Missouri	44% to 69%
Texas	42% to 67%
Pennsylvania	69% to 87%
New York	72% to 87%

Improvements in State Investment

State investment in need-based financial aid as a percentage of the federal investment

Nevada	2% to 48%
North Carolina	3% to 70%
Virginia	6% to 50%
Montana	1% to 9%
Utah	1% to 8%
Washington	24% to 108%
Texas	7% to 32%
Delaware	13% to 49%
Missouri	8% to 29%
West Virginia	12% to 43%

Declines in State Investment

State investment in need-based financial aid as a percentage of the federal investment

Georgia	4% to 0%
Hawaii	8% to 5%
Rhode Island	36% to 28%
Iowa	40% to 33%
Michigan	33% to 28%
Illinois	89% to 82%

*For these indicators, an increase (in the percentage of income needed to pay for college expenses) represents a decline in affordability.

Completion

Since the early 1990s, most states have increased the number of students earning certificates and degrees as a proportion of state residents without a college degree. However, overall rates of completion have remained fairly low and even the performance of the best states in this area is not impressive. For example, in the top states only 68% of students at four-year institutions complete a bachelor's degree within six years of enrolling.

Key Indicator: All degree completions per 100 students



48 states improved or stayed the same on the key indicator



2 states declined on the key indicator

Improvements

First-time, full-time students completing a bachelor's degree within six years of college entrance

Idaho	33% to 43%
Louisiana	33% to 42%
Nebraska	44% to 56%
Kentucky	37% to 47%

Certificates and degrees awarded at all colleges and universities per 1,000 state residents (ages 18 to 44) without a college degree

Kentucky	15 to 32
Georgia	15 to 27
Arkansas	15 to 24
West Virginia	18 to 27

Benefits

Since the early 1990s, most states have increased their “educational capital” as measured by the percentage of adults with an associate’s degree, a bachelor’s degree, or higher. However, the benefits of higher education still vary by race/ethnicity and by state of residence.

Key Indicator: Percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with a bachelor’s degree or higher



50 states improved or stayed the same on the key indicator



0 states declined on the key indicator

Improvements

Percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with a bachelor’s degree or higher

Kentucky	15% to 22%
South Dakota	20% to 28%
North Carolina	19% to 27%
Iowa	20% to 27%
North Dakota	21% to 29%

Gaps in Performance

Percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with a bachelor’s degree or higher:

Massachusetts:	43% (whites), 22% (blacks)
Virginia:	38% (whites), 19% (blacks)
California:	40% (whites), 10% (Hispanics)
New Mexico:	40% (whites), 13% (Hispanics)
Alaska:	32% (whites), 8% (Native Alaskans)

Learning

All states receive an “Incomplete” in Learning because there are not sufficient data to allow meaningful state-by-state comparisons.

State Grades 2008

	Preparation	Participation	Affordability	Completion	Benefits	Learning
Alabama	D+	D+	F	C-	C	I
Alaska	C+	F	F	F	C+	I
Arizona	D	A	F	B	B-	I
Arkansas	C-	D+	F	C-	D+	I
California	C+	C	C-	B-	B+	I
Colorado	A-	C+	F	B-	B+	I
Connecticut	A	C-	F	B-	A-	I
Delaware	C+	C-	F	B	C+	I
Florida	C	D	F	B+	C	I
Georgia	C+	D-	F	B-	B	I
Hawaii	C-	D	F	C	B-	I
Idaho	C	D	F	C	C-	I
Illinois	B	C	F	B+	B	I
Indiana	C	C	F	B-	D+	I
Iowa	B	A	F	A	C+	I
Kansas	B	B-	F	B	C+	I
Kentucky	C	C	F	B	D+	I
Louisiana	D-	F	F	C+	D	I
Maine	B-	C-	F	C+	C	I
Maryland	A-	C	F	B-	A	I
Massachusetts	A	B-	F	A	A	I
Michigan	C	C	F	C+	B+	I
Minnesota	B	B	F	A	B	I
Mississippi	D	D+	F	C	D	I
Missouri	C+	C	F	B	C+	I
Montana	B-	D+	F	C-	C+	I
Nebraska	B-	B	F	B+	B	I
Nevada	C	F	F	F	D	I
New Hampshire	B	C-	F	A-	B	I
New Jersey	A-	C	F	C+	A-	I
New Mexico	D-	B-	F	D+	C+	I
New York	B	D+	F	B+	B	I
North Carolina	B-	D+	F	B-	C+	I
North Dakota	B-	B+	F	A	D	I
Ohio	B-	C-	F	B-	C+	I
Oklahoma	C-	C-	F	C	D+	I
Oregon	C+	D	F	C+	B+	I
Pennsylvania	B-	C-	F	A	C	I
Rhode Island	C+	C+	F	A	B-	I
South Carolina	C+	D-	F	C+	C	I
South Dakota	B	B	F	B	D+	I
Tennessee	C	D	F	C	C	I
Texas	B	D-	F	C-	C+	I
Utah	B	B-	F	B+	B	I
Vermont	A-	C	F	A-	C+	I
Virginia	B+	C	F	B	A	I
Washington	C+	D	F	A-	B	I
West Virginia	C	C	F	C	F	I
Wisconsin	B	C+	F	A-	C	I
Wyoming	C	C	F	A	D-	I

State Change Over Time on Key Indicators

State	Preparation	Participation	Affordability	Completion	Benefits
Alabama	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Alaska	▲	▼	▼	▲	▲
Arizona	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Arkansas	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
California	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Colorado	▼	▼	▼	▲	▲
Connecticut	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Delaware	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Florida	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Georgia	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Hawaii	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Idaho	▲	▼	▼	▲	▲
Illinois	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Indiana	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Iowa	▼	▲	▼	▼	▲
Kansas	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Kentucky	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Louisiana	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Maine	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Maryland	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Massachusetts	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Michigan	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Minnesota	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Mississippi	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Missouri	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Montana	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Nebraska	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Nevada	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
New Hampshire	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
New Jersey	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
New Mexico	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
New York	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
North Carolina	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
North Dakota	▲	▼	▼	▼	▲
Ohio	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Oklahoma	▲	▼	▼	▲	▲
Oregon	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Pennsylvania	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Rhode Island	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
South Carolina	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
South Dakota	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Tennessee	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Texas	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Utah	▼	▼	▼	▲	▲
Vermont	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Virginia	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Washington	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
West Virginia	▲	▲	▼	▲	▲
Wisconsin	▼	▲	▼	▲	▲
Wyoming	▼	▼	▼	▲	▲

▲ Indicates that the state has increased or remained stable on the key indicator in the category.

▼ Indicates that the state has declined on the key indicator in the category.

Note: Performance is based on the state's improvement or decline on the key indicator in that category.

For a list of key indicators by category, please see *Improvements and Declines* starting on page 13.



The Information Gap: Much Talk, Little Progress

By Dennis P. Jones

Over the past decade, states have used *Measuring Up* to evaluate and compare their performance in higher education. Policymakers and the public have tracked their state’s progress and setbacks in preparing students for education beyond high school, enrolling them in college, trying to keep college affordable, and conferring degrees. During this time, one trend has held constant: not all the information needed by policymakers is available to them.

When first published in 2000, *Measuring Up* identified the key areas where comparative, objective information was not available across states. Most of the deficiencies noted at that time persist today (see table). In fact, in many areas there is less information available now. In some cases, states have not participated in national assessments that would have provided important state-level data; in other cases, national groups have not collected sufficient data from each of the states. The result is a failing grade — an F — for the nation’s performance in developing data resources for state-by-state comparisons in higher education.

Preparation

There has been some improvement in assessing how well states prepare students for college. The Census Bureau’s new American Community Survey (ACS) now provides more timely and accurate data about high school completion. However, this improvement does not affect two important areas: advanced course taking and student achievement.

Advanced K-12 Course Taking. Enrollment levels in advanced courses can help to indicate preparedness for college. Since 2000, substantially fewer states participate in national surveys that indicate how many eighth graders take algebra and how many high school students enroll in advanced math and science.

Student Achievement in the 12th Grade. Most states — but not all — continue to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for eighth graders. For high school seniors, there is a comparable national assessment but it does not provide data at the state level. Information about the “stock of learning” that students acquire in high school and carry into college continues to be missing in the states.

Participation

There has been no progress in assessing the extent to which states provide opportunities for residents to enroll in higher education.

College Enrollment Rates for Recent High School Graduates, by Income. At the national level, rates of college enrollment are available by racial group and by income. At the state level, these rates are available by racial group, but not by income. Data about student financial aid

Progress in Developing Data Resources Nationwide: F	
Preparation	
Advanced K-12 course taking	Not Improved
Student achievement in 12th grade	Not Improved
Participation	
College enrollment rates by income	Not Improved
Migration of students across states	Not Improved
Affordability	
Unmet financial need for qualified students	Not Improved
Distribution of student aid	Improved Somewhat
Undergraduate student loans	Improved
Completion	
Progression of students across systems	Not Improved
Degree completion in 6 and 10 years	Improved Somewhat
Benefits	
Educational attainment	Improved
Civic engagement	Improved
Learning	
Adult skill levels	Regressed
Cost effectiveness	Not Improved

packages for college freshmen have improved, but nothing is known at the state level about the family incomes of students who do not apply for (or receive) such aid. Given the changing demographics of college students, information about the family incomes of college-eligible individuals and those who actually enroll is crucial for effective state policymaking. Its absence represents one of the most notable of all the information gaps.

Migration of Students Across States. Information about the state of origin of college freshmen continues to be available. As a result, state-to-state migration of entering students can be determined. Once students enroll, however, federal data collection does not offer a way to track their progress or geographic location. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) could be used for this purpose if the protocols for use could be agreed upon nationally. Matching records from multiple state-level record systems has proven possible but arduous. At a time when workforce development is particularly important to state policymakers, the inability to assess migration patterns beyond the freshman year represents a severe handicap.

Affordability

There has been some progress in tracking the affordability of higher education for students and families, but this progress has not gone nearly far enough.

Unmet Financial Need for Eligible and Qualified Students. The available data estimate unmet financial need on a national basis, but not at the state level. As a consequence, there is still no state-by-state assessment of the extent to which financial factors affect college participation.

Distribution of Student Aid. Since 2000, some progress has been made in calculating financial aid patterns, though the improvements are far from adequate. Data on the amounts of different kinds of aid distributed to freshmen is now available by campus. Still missing, however, are data about the economic circumstances of aid recipients and the extent to which aid packages change as students advance in their college careers. For example, do loans supplant grants after the freshman year in some states more than others? An oversample of 12 states by the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey in 2004 provided this kind of in-depth information.

Until this information is available for all 50 states, however, policymakers will not be able to have a clear picture of college affordability.

Undergraduate Student Loans. In 2000, data about borrowing by graduate and undergraduate students were combined, making it impossible to determine levels of undergraduate borrowing. This problem has been remedied — one of the few areas of clear progress.

Completion

Problems remain in assessing whether students are completing their educational programs in a timely manner.

Progression of Individual Students Across Systems and States. Since many students transfer among colleges, it is important to track students across institutions. Many states have data systems that allow such tracking across public institutions in-state, but not across state lines. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse have been analyzed through a pilot effort. While this resource has limitations, it has proven capable of yielding good information for most states. Not all institutions participate, although a majority in most states do. Key data elements have not been available, such as whether a student is enrolled for the first time in college. Since protocols have not been agreed upon nationally to continue the pilot analysis, it must be concluded that no lasting progress has been made in this area.

Degree Completion in Six and Ten Years. Unlike in 2000, all institutions of higher education now report information on the proportion of full-time, first-time students who complete their programs within 150% of program length (six years for bachelor's degrees). Completion rates are also provided for students after four and five years. This is clearly an improvement, but there are still major shortcomings. Six years is too short a time period for many students, particularly working adults. The data cannot track students who transfer between institutions, both in-state and out-of-state. And the data are particularly flawed for community colleges because they fail to account for students who start part-time (the majority of enrollments at many community colleges) and students who transfer to four-year institutions. This is an area where most of the data are available in many states, but not in a way that allows national comparisons. In sum, progress has been made but remains inadequate.

Benefits

There has been some improvement in tracking the benefits that accrue to states as a result of having an educated population.

Educational Attainment. Two improvements have occurred in assessing whether state residents have a bachelor's degree. First, the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) now provides much more accurate data about the educational attainment of adults. Secondly, it is now possible to calculate the percentage of college degree holders who were born in the state in which they are living. This provides a basis for comparing states in developing home-grown talent.

Civic Engagement. New information about volunteerism is now available, including comparisons of volunteerism for college graduates and for those without college degrees. Although these data have rather large sampling errors at the state level, some progress has been made.

Learning

As in 2000, there are still no common benchmarks that would permit state comparisons of the knowledge and skills of college students. There are isolated instances in which learning outcomes are assessed, such as South Dakota's mandatory exam of rising college juniors. There are assessments that cover portions of the population, such as Graduate Record Examinations (GREs), which test those pursuing graduate study. And there are assessments in selected fields, such as licensure exams in nursing or WorkKeys in selected vocational fields. But there is no nationwide approach to assessing learning that would allow state-to-state comparisons. What energy was available for state assessments in 2000 has been directed to campus-level assessments in 2008, such as the Voluntary System of Accountability. This represents a step backward, not forward.

Adult Skill Levels. In assessing adult skills in the states, there has also been a large step backward. In 1992, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) provided a sufficient survey base to estimate the mastery of higher-level skills among the adult populations of most states. That assessment was re-administered in 2003. In 1992, 13 states participated in an oversample; in 2003, only six states did so. And almost five years later, the data have not been released for secondary analysis. National results indicate lower literacy levels for adults in 2003, but data are unavailable for all but a limited number of states. If states are to improve workforce preparedness, it is crucial that policymakers have access to information about the skill levels of state residents.

Cost Effectiveness

Over the past decade, there has been little progress in assessing state performance in higher education relative to the resources committed to the endeavor. An approach to calculating cost effectiveness was developed by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). However, until learning outcomes are available by state, calculating the cost effectiveness of higher education will continue to rely on proxy measures that leave much to be desired.

Conclusion

State leaders and the public need access to objective information to assess and improve higher education. No single entity is at fault for the absence of information about one of the most critical problems facing the nation today; there is plenty of blame to go around. In some areas the states — in others the nation — must provide leadership in developing the data resources for state-by-state analysis. It is time for every state — and the nation — to commit to getting the information needed to advance the educational attainment of the citizenry, and to halt the worrisome slide of the United States vis-à-vis other developed nations in this area.

Stuck on Student Learning

By Peter T. Ewell

In 2000, the first edition of *Measuring Up* gave every state an “Incomplete” in Learning to highlight the fact that the United States lacks consistent measures of student learning in higher education. Over the past decade, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education has been consistent in reporting progress on the development of measures of student learning. *Measuring Up 2004* reported learning results for five states that participated in a national demonstration project. *Measuring Up 2006* recognized an additional six states that participated fully in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL). These efforts in the states signified modest progress compared with a decade ago.

Other activities also brought attention to the importance of assessing student learning at the college level. The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) were both launched since we began our effort. In addition, the National Commission on the Future of Higher Education, convened by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, helped accreditors and institutions of higher education become more interested in assessing learning.

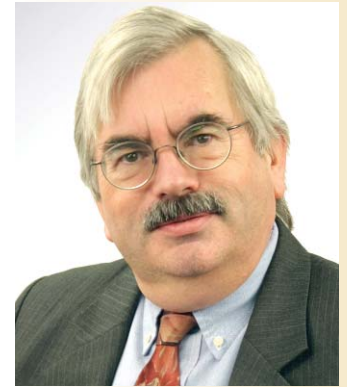
Despite this limited progress, however, an important dimension of assessing learning has been lost: the need for states and the nation to understand more about the “educational capital” of their population. The educational capital of a state is the level of collective knowledge and skills possessed by state residents. Assessing educational capital can be accomplished through state participation in national surveys of adult literacy, assessments of the abilities of college graduates, as well as other measures.

In its deliberations, the Spellings Commission recommended that more states take leadership in measuring educational capital through the approach pioneered by the National Center’s five-state demonstration project. The Commission also recommended increasing state participation in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, as well as administering it more frequently. The nation and the states need these

measures in order to guide investment in higher education and align public policy with the needs of state residents.

As a nation, however, we appear to be regressing in this area. Only six states signed up for the oversample of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy in 2003, down from 12 in 1992. A repeat administration of this assessment is nowhere in sight. Almost five years after the assessment was administered, the National Center for Education Statistics has yet to produce 50-state estimates of citizen performance on prose literacy. Meanwhile, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is moving forward with an international feasibility study on collegiate learning without having a commitment from the United States to participate.

Attention to these issues at the state level is also uneven. A few states continue to assess students using established examinations for which national benchmarks are available. Among them is South Dakota, which requires all students attending public universities, as a condition of graduation, to meet a specified standard on the ACT’s Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). Kentucky will replicate a variant of the Learning Model developed by the National Center’s five-state demonstration project. Public universities in West Virginia will administer the Collegiate Learning Assessment on a statewide basis next year. And Oregon is



experimenting with portfolio measures in collaboration with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU).

On the other hand, Arkansas abandoned its longstanding program of statewide testing centered on the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency last year. A recent survey by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) found that the engagement of state agencies in assessment at the college level is at an all-time low. Further, where states are showing interest in assessing college learning, their focus is at the campus level, to demonstrate institutional accountability. They are not measuring learning through a statewide approach, which can inform and improve state policy by identifying gaps in what college-educated residents know and can do.

A growing number of institutions are holding themselves accountable through such initiatives as the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) developed by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). However admirable these efforts may be, they provide little real information for state policy. They are being undertaken largely for political reasons — to blunt attempts by the U.S. Department of Education to impose new reporting requirements about

student learning through accreditation — rather than as part of a broader effort to systematically improve instruction.

In short, events in the wake of the Spellings Commission served to politicize public debate about information on student learning at precisely the point at which such information should be collectively owned and generated. Nowhere has this condition been more apparent than in the development of longitudinal databases. At a time when more than two-thirds of students earning bachelor's degrees have attended several institutions, we as a nation lack the capacity to track student progress because of political opposition that masquerades as a concern about privacy. As 42 states have demonstrated, higher education agencies using today's information technology are perfectly capable of creating powerful student unit databases that do not compromise security.

With America's competitive edge in producing college graduates eroding steadily, states need benchmarked information about student learning more than ever. In the past decade, some states have developed the technical capacity to generate such information and the policy wisdom to use it effectively. But across the nation, we are no further along in producing such capacity in 2008 than we were in 2000 when *Measuring Up* first awarded every state an "Incomplete" in Learning.

Facing the Nation:

The Role of College Leaders in Higher Education Policy

By David W. Breneman

Measuring Up 2008, the fifth edition of the National Center's biennial reports on state performance in higher education, arrives at a time of great uncertainty and concern about the nation's economy, as the financial credit crisis has spawned bank failings not seen since the Great Depression. As the country lurches toward recession, most state and local budgets are in serious deficit, families continue to lose homes to foreclosure, jobs are being lost by the thousands, and a massive \$700 billion federal rescue plan has yet to demonstrate its success. The luxury we may have had in prior years to ignore the warning signs of current problems has now expired. We have no choice but to focus intently on solving these economic problems, casting aside the behaviors that helped bring us to this critical moment.

That higher education is central to future economic progress is beyond dispute, but a decade of *Measuring Up* reports paints a worrisome picture about how well this vital sector is performing: participation in higher education remains flat at best, affordability has declined sharply, and graduation rates continue to be a disgrace. Whatever lead we enjoyed over other countries in the last half of the 20th Century has been lost, as both our participation and completion rates have declined relative to other advanced nations. Far too much effort and too many resources have been devoted to enhancing institutional prestige, at the cost of balanced development of a high-performing system of colleges and universities able to serve the diverse educational needs of the next generation. We have increasingly relied on market forces to shape higher education, and the result has been a vastly widening resource gap between a small number of exceedingly wealthy institutions and a much larger number of poor ones. In a sense, the *Measuring Up* reports can be read as assessing the average performance of our colleges as a whole.

In earlier reports, Robert Atwell, Jane Wellman, and I have remarked on the absence of college and university leaders from the national policy debates about higher education. One result has been an unfortunate, if understandable, ten-

dency for state and national political leaders to dominate the discussion. Let me be clear in what I am saying; college and university leaders have certainly worked hard on issues of institutional self-interest, as they must, but few have provided strong voices on policy matters that transcend the local campus. To default to those outside higher education on such substantive issues as academic preparation for college-level work, access for the poor and disadvantaged, success in retention and graduation, and the serious and growing problem of affordability is to limit the nation's ability to make headway in improving the performance of our system as a system. One result, as external parties have criticized and advocated for changes, has been a growing defensiveness on the part of higher education leaders rather than an active engagement with legislators and policy analysts in seeking solutions. We are all the poorer for this failed conversation, and as noted earlier, such failure is a luxury the nation can no longer afford.

One concrete example from the National Center's experience may clarify this point. The *Measuring Up* series has been criticized by numerous college leaders for reporting failing grades for virtually all states in making higher education affordable for students and their families. In private conversations, university leaders have told



me that these failing grades have made it more difficult for their institutions to achieve tuition increases. Another response has been to attack the methodology used in *Measuring Up* to assess the affordability of higher education. In short, many university administrators, rather than addressing the state and national challenges that *Measuring Up* emphasizes, perceive the reports themselves as the problem.

None of us associated with *Measuring Up* would argue that we have the perfect instrument for measuring the complex issue of affordability in higher education. However, we all agree that keeping college affordable is a serious and growing problem, potentially much worse for the next generation of aspiring college students. We also agree that there are limits to the share of educational cost that can be shifted to students

and families. Furthermore, if state and national leaders fail to improve upon this situation, the economic prospects for the United States will be grim. Yet so far, we are failing as a nation to address this issue squarely and honestly.

The National Center is committed to developing a forum in which college and university leaders can meet with political leaders and knowledgeable policy professionals to advance a conversation about the enduring challenges of preparation, participation, affordability, completion, and accountability in higher education. The problems are now so serious and the stakes so high that the most experienced educators and political leaders must work together for policies that will enable higher education to continue to serve the millions of Americans whose well-being depends upon it.

What's New in *Measuring Up 2008*?

Measuring Change Over Time

As in previous editions, the Change Over Time arrows in *Measuring Up 2008* compare each state's current performance with its own previous performance in the 1990s. This year, however, a state's Change Over Time is determined by its improvement or decline in performance on a key indicator in each performance category. The key indicators were selected because they are broad gauges for understanding state success in the performance areas. The key indicators are:

Preparation: Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds with a high school credential (1990 to 2006)

Participation: Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college (1991 to 2007)

Affordability: Percentage of income (average of all income groups) needed to pay for college expenses at public four-year institutions (1999-2007)

Completion: All degree completions per 100 students (1992-2007)

Benefits: Percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with a bachelor's degree or higher (1990 to 2006)

States receive either an "up" or a "down" arrow in each performance area. An "up" arrow indicates that the state has increased or remained stable on the key indicator in the category; a "down" arrow indicates that the state has declined in the key indicator in the category. The National Center does not establish benchmarks for improvement; however, the Change Over Time performance of the top states is depicted graphically on the second page of each state's summary report card. Many states, but not all, have improved on these key indicators. Affordability is different from the other categories in that lower percentages indicate higher performance.

Improvements in Data

A number of new data sources are used for *Measuring Up 2008* because the new data provide states with a more comprehensive portrayal of their performance.

This year, the National Center replaced the data derived from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) with the American Community Survey (ACS), which is also administered by the Census Bureau. The ACS was expanded to a sample size of three million households in 2005 and will eventually replace the long survey form of the decennial census. It has much larger sample sizes than the CPS, making it a valuable resource for state data. As a result of this change, comparing results from previous years is no longer possible for all of the indicators that were based on the CPS. The indicators affected include: the percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds with a high school credential; the percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in higher education; the percentage of 25- to 49-year-olds enrolled in higher education; certificates and degrees awarded per 1,000 state residents (age 18 to 49) without a college degree; and the percentage of the population with either an associate's or a bachelor's degree. The national advisory board for *Measuring Up* and the National Center have concluded that, compared with the CPS data, the new data provide states with a more comprehensive portrayal of their performance. (For more information, please see the *Technical Guide for Measuring Up 2008* at www.highereducation.org).

In addition, *Measuring Up 2008* includes two new indicators, one in Completion and one in Benefits. In the Completion category, the new indicator measures the number of certificates and degrees awarded in relation to the number of state residents (ages 18 to 49) without a college degree. In the Benefits category, the new indicator identifies the percentage of adults who have earned an associate's degree, which parallels an existing indicator identifying the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree.

Questions and Answers about *Measuring Up 2008*

Who is being graded in this report card, and why?

Measuring Up 2008 grades states, not students or individual colleges or universities, on their performance in higher education. The states are responsible for preparing students for higher education by means of sound K-12 school systems, and they provide most of the public financial support — approximately \$77 billion in 2008 — for colleges and universities. Through their oversight of public institutions of higher education, state leaders affect the types and number of education programs available in the state. State leaders also determine the limits of financial support and often influence tuition and fees for public colleges and universities. They also establish how much state-based financial aid is available to students and their families, which affects students attending both private and public colleges and universities. In addition, state economic development policies influence the income advantage that residents receive from having some college experience or a college degree.

Why is a state-by-state report card needed for higher education?

Measuring Up provides the general public and policymakers with objective information they need to assess and improve higher education. With the publication of the first edition of *Measuring Up* in 2000, states could evaluate and compare performance in higher education within a national context for the first time. The report card series was developed as a tool for fostering improvement in policy and performance.

What factors are considered when grading states?

The report card grades states in six overall performance categories:

Preparation: How adequately does the state prepare students for education and training beyond high school?

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

Affordability: How affordable is higher education for students and their families?

Completion: Do students make progress toward and complete their certificates or degrees in a timely manner?

Benefits: What benefits does the state receive from having a highly educated population?

Learning: What is known about student learning as a result of education and training beyond high school?

How are states graded?

States receive letter grades in each performance category. Each category consists of several indicators, or quantitative measures — a total of 36 indicators in the five graded categories. Grades are calculated based on each state's performance on these indicators, relative to the best-performing states. Grades in *Measuring Up 2008* reflect state performance for 2006 or 2007, the most recent information available.

For the sixth category, Learning, states receive an "Incomplete" because there is not sufficient information about student learning for meaningful state-by-state comparisons.

What sources of information are used to determine the grades?

All data used to grade states in *Measuring Up 2008* were collected from reliable national sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education. All data are the most recent public information available for state comparisons. Please see the *Technical Guide for Measuring Up 2008* for more information regarding data sources.

Does the report card grade on a curve?

No. Grades are calculated by comparing each state to the best-performing states for each indicator.

What grading scale is used?

As shown in "How We Grade States," letter grades are based on the familiar 100-point scale: An "A" represents a score of 90 or above, and an "F" represents a score below 60.

How do we measure Change Over Time?

Change Over Time indicators compare each state's current performance with its own previous performance in the 1990s. For each category, the state's change is determined by its improvement or decline in performance on a key indicator in that category. This information is displayed in two ways. First, states receive either an "up" or a "down" arrow in each performance area. An "up" arrow indicates that the state has increased or remained stable on the key indicator in the category, a "down" arrow indicates

that the state has declined in the key indicator in the category. Second, information about Change Over Time is presented graphically in greater detail on the second page of each state's summary report card.

Does the report card use data that are unique to a particular state?

Measuring Up 2008 only uses data that are comparable across states. As a result, some states may find that their own internal data present a fuller picture of the state's strengths and weaknesses in higher education. The National Center encourages states to add their own data to the report card's categories to create a more detailed picture of state performance.

What happens if data are missing for a state?

When information is not available on a particular indicator, we assume for the purposes of grading that the state is doing no better or worse on that particular indicator than it is on the other indicators in that performance category. However, the report card uses the most recent data available. In the event that a state has data that were available for the 2006 edition of *Measuring Up* but not for the 2008 edition, the data from *Measuring Up 2006* are used again in this edition, since they are the most recent data available.

How does the report card account for the migration of people across state lines?

Migration affects two of the performance categories: Participation and Benefits. One of the indicators in the Participation category accounts for the migration of young people, but the indicator in the Benefits category does not, due to limitations in national data collection. In the Participation category, please see the net migration of students reported in the "Other Key Facts" section of the state report cards. In the Benefits category, states receive credit for having an educated population since they reap the economic and societal rewards regardless of where their residents were educated. With the exception of the Benefits category, all other graded performance categories recognize states for developing rather than importing talent.

How frequently are the report cards published?

The report cards are published every two years. Previous report cards were published in 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006.

What information is provided but not graded?

The state report cards highlight important gaps in college opportunities for various income and

ethnic groups, identify improvements and setbacks in each state's performance over time, and compare state performance in higher education with other countries. Each state report card also presents important contextual information, such as demographic trends, student migration data, and state funding levels for higher education.

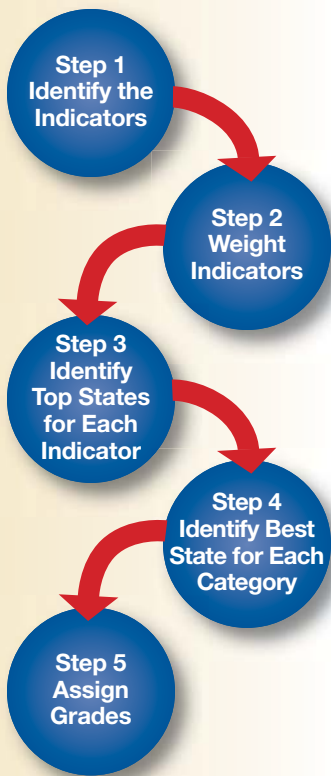
Why does *Measuring Up 2008* include international indicators?

As in 2006, this year's edition of *Measuring Up* provides information on key international indicators of educational performance. In the global economy, it is critical for each nation to establish and maintain a competitive edge through the ongoing, high-quality education of its population. *Measuring Up 2008* offers international comparisons that reveal how well the United States and each of the 50 states are preparing residents with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy. As with other data in the report card, each international measure is based on the most current data available. In this case, the data are from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). International comparisons are used to gauge the states' and the nation's standing relative to OECD countries on the participation and educational success of their populations. Please see the *Technical Guide for Measuring Up 2008* for more information regarding data sources.

How can I find out more about the report card or my state's performance?

Explore the National Center's Web site at www.highereducation.org to:

- Download state report cards and the national report card.
- Compare any state with the best-performing states in each performance category.
- Compare states' grades and indicator results in each performance category.
- Compare states' other key factors (such as demographic indicators and higher education appropriations).
- Identify gaps in state performance for ethnic and income groups.
- Link directly to the sources that gathered the data.
- Obtain technical information and sources for indicators, weights, and calculations.
- Find out more about the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.



A	= 93 & Up
A-	= 90–92
B+	= 87–89
B	= 83–86
B-	= 80–82
C+	= 77–79
C	= 73–76
C-	= 70–72
D+	= 67–69
D	= 63–66
D-	= 60–62
F	= Under 60

How We Grade States

State grades (A, B, C, D, or F) in the five performance categories are based on each state’s performance relative to other states.

Step 1. Identify the indicators

Indicators, or measures, are selected for each performance category: preparation, participation, affordability, completion, and benefits. All indicators used in *Measuring Up*:

- are important in assessing performance in the category,
- are collected regularly by reliable, public sources that follow accepted practices for data collection,
- are comparable across the 50 states, and
- measure performance results.

Step 2. Weight indicators

Each indicator is assigned a weight based on its importance to the performance category. For each category, the sum of all weights is 100%.

Step 3. Identify top states for each indicator

State results, or raw scores, on each indicator are converted to an “index” scale of 0 to 100, using the performance of the top five states as the benchmark. This establishes a high, but achievable standard of performance. Beginning with *Measuring Up 2004*, the performance of the top five states in the early 1990s sets the benchmark for the current performance in the affordability category. All other categories continue to use the top five states in the current year.

Step 4. Identify best state for each category

State scores for each category are calculated from the state’s results on the indicators and the indicators’ weights. In each category, the sum of all the index scores on the indicators is converted to a scale of 0 to 100, based on the performance of the top state in the category.

Step 5. Assign grades

Grades are assigned based on the category index scores, using a grading scale common in many high school and college classes.

How We Measure Change Over Time

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What do the arrows mean?



The state has increased or remained stable on the key indicator in the category



The state has declined on the key indicator in the category

Acknowledgements

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education is grateful to many individuals and organizations for their advice and assistance in the development of *Measuring Up 2008*. The responsibility for creating, developing, and producing the report card, however, rests entirely with the National Center.

The National Center was advised on the fifth report card on state performance in higher education by an independent review committee, called “Measuring Up 2008” National Advisory Group (see sidebar).

The National Center wishes to thank members of the national advisory committee for their essays in this report. David Breneman, chair of the advisory committee challenges higher education leaders to engage in public debate about the performance and future of American higher education; Peter Ewell provides an update on the Learning category; and, Dennis Jones provides a summary of the nation’s ability to inform a policy discussion through the systematic collection of information. In addition, Alan Wagner provides an analysis for the international indicators on which we relied for the comparative aspects of *Measuring Up 2008*.

The state higher education executive officers and commissions in each state reviewed the data used for grading in *Measuring Up 2008*.

Joni Finney, vice president for the National Center and professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania was the principal author of state reports and was responsible for leadership and direction of *Measuring Up 2008*. Her report co-authors include: Patrick Kelly, William Doyle, Stacey Zis, Darcie Harvey, Heather Jack, Kathryn Ankrum, Daphne Borromeo and Peter Ewell. Patrick Kelly, senior associate with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) was lead analyst and project manager at NCHEMS. William Doyle, assistant professor of higher education at Vanderbilt University, was a consultant for the National Center for *Measuring Up 2008*.

Heather Jack, policy consultant, was project manager of the report card for the National Center. She edited state reports, oversaw the development of the national report and led the design and production process. Stacey Zis, research associate at NCHEMS played a critical

role in project coordination and overseeing the quality control process for NCHEMS.

John Clark, data analyst for NCHEMS, collected and analyzed data, provided ongoing technical assistance, and assisted in writing the technical report. Darcie Harvey, project coordinator at the National Center, contributed to the analysis of the national report and oversaw the quality control process for the National Center.

Erica Torres, data analyst at NCHEMS, assisted with data collection and provided document support. Marianne Boeke, research associate, assisted with the data quality checking process and assisted in writing state reports. Martha Swaggart, Ingrid Walsh and Johanna Van Hise Heart assisted with the data quality checking process.

Brian Prescott, research associate at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, assisted with the data analysis and Thomas M. Smith, associate professor of public policy and education at Vanderbilt University, provided a special analysis on teacher quality. Mikyung Ryu, senior research associate with the American Council on Education, provided technical assistance.

The following individuals provided data used in *Measuring Up 2008*: Rolf Blank, Council of Chief State School Officers; Thomas G. Mortenson, Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY; Christopher Ward, United States Department of Education; Ellen Sawtell and Sherby Jenan-Leger, The College Board.

In addition, the following individuals assisted with data on learning: Bernie Olson and Geraldine Piskorski, American Society of Clinical Pathology; Phil Handwerk, Law School Admission Council; Don Meagher and James Yang,

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Pearson; Cynthia A. Searcy, Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy; Dan Anderson, American Registry of Radiologic Technologists; and David G. Payne, Educational Testing Service.

Daphne Borromeo, director of communications for the National Center, led the communications planning, including the Web site update for *Measuring Up 2008*.

Kathryn Ankrum was managing editor for *Measuring Up 2008*. Thad Nodine of Nodine Consulting and Rod O'Neal were senior editors. Mae Kaven of The Last Detail, Derek A. Squires, and Adam Steckler provided proofreading and other editorial services.

Sheppard Ranbom, president, Travis Reindl, state policy and campaigns director, Robert Johnston, education policy and media director, Kari Hudnell, media associate, Patrick Murray, associate, all of Communication *Works*, L.L.C. advised and assisted the National Center on the communications of *Measuring Up 2008*.

Dennis Caldwell, Creative Only, developed the initial design for the state reports. Michael Molanphy, Varadero Communications, L.L.C., developed the final design for the state and national reports. Communication *Works*, L.L.C., provided production services. Heming Nelson of 4Site Interactive Studios, Inc. and Michael Shannon of NETView Communications provided Web site development and support. Printing and letter-shop services were provided by Goetz Printing Company.

Frank Bowen provided on-going editorial support of *Measuring Up 2008*.

Noreen Savelle of the National Center assisted in proofreading, dissemination, and with the release event. Gail Moore coordinated the Center distribution and mailing, and Lori King and Holly Earlywine supported and assisted with the development of *Measuring Up 2008*.

Measuring Up 2008 Resources

To view *Measuring Up 2008* and its resources visit www.highereducation.org

National Picture

- 2008 Snapshot: Performance overview on national maps
- Improvements and Declines: The nation's performance since the early 1990s
- Download the national report in PDF format

State Reports

- State Report Cards: A comprehensive picture of higher education in each state
- Download each state's report card in PDF format

Compare States

- Graded Performance: Compare state results by performance category
- State Facts: Compare non-graded state information
- Index Scores (sort/compare/map): Sort states by their rank within each category and create a national map based on individual indicator scores

Commentary

- *Foreword*, by Governor James. B. Hunt Jr., Chairman of the National Center's Board of Directors
- *The 2008 National Report Card: Modest Improvements, Persistent Disparities, Eroding Global Competitiveness*, by Patrick M. Callan, President, The National Center
- *The Information Gap: Much Talk, Little Progress*, by Dennis P. Jones, President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

- *Stuck on Student Learning*, by Peter T. Ewell, Vice President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

- *Facing the Nation: The Role of College Leaders in Higher Education Policy*, by David W. Breneman, University Professor and Director, University of Virginia

News Room

- *National Press Releases*
- *State Press Releases*
- *Press Contact Information*

About Measuring Up

- *What's New in Measuring Up 2008?*
- *Questions and Answers about Measuring Up 2008*
- *How We Grade States*
- *How We Measure Change*
- *Measuring Up 2008 Database*
- *Technical Guide*
- *Measuring Up 2008 National Advisory Group*
- *Acknowledgements*
- *About the National Center*
- *Site Map*

To view *Measuring Up 2008* individual state report cards for each of the 50 states, visit www.highereducation.org.

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