

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE NEBRASKA STATE COLLEGES**  
**CHANCELLOR AND COLLEGE INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

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*INFORMATION ONLY:*      **Nebraska Attainment Goal**

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Over the past decade states around the country have set forward degree attainment goals to remain competitive by closing education and employment opportunity gaps. As early as 2015, projections predicted that sixty five percent (65%) of the job vacancies by 2020 would require additional training and credentials above a high school diploma. Early state adopters set goals between sixty percent (60%) and sixty five percent (65%), and projections show that attainment levels continue to trend upward as new projections now establish training and credential needs out to 2030. Nebraska remains just one (1) of three (3) states to develop an attainment goal for the state. Representatives from the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE), Department of Education, State College System, Community Colleges, and the University System have developed a strategy advocating for a seventy percent (70%) attainment goal. Dr. Mike Baumgartner (Executive Director of CCPE) drafted the "State Goal Concept Paper", which attempts to articulate: 1) Why Nebraska needs a state attainment goal; 2) What the appropriate attainment goal should be for the state; and 3) Possible action steps for the partners to build stakeholder support.

Chancellor Turman will provide an overview of the work by the various partners during the past eighteen (18) months, engagement with stakeholders, and seek the support from the Board of Trustees to support the ongoing efforts to establish a seventy percent (70%) degree attainment goal for Nebraska. This goal aligns closely with ten (10) of the twenty (2) performance metrics outlined in the strategic plan, including all indicators for the "Student Success and Completion" and "Workforce and Economic Impact" goals.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

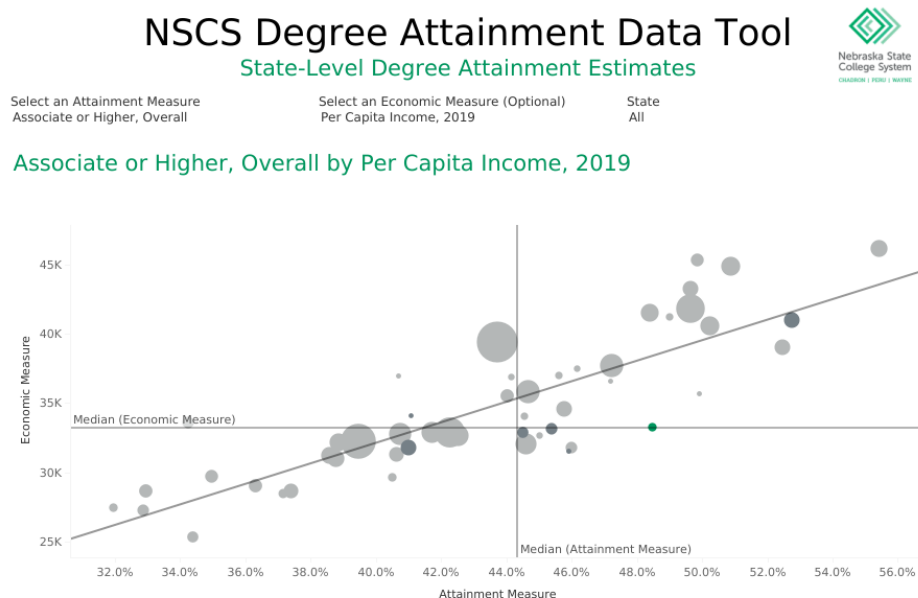
- State Goal Concept Paper 4.0      (PDF)

## Setting a State Educational Attainment Goal for Nebraska

### I. Purpose:

#### A. Why does Nebraska need a state educational attainment goal?

- Higher state educational attainment is highly correlated with higher state GDP, per capita income, labor force participation, and quality of life. The most educated states are the most likely to provide the good life for their residents.
- Statewide educational attainment goals help state leaders, college and university officials, K12 school leaders, employers, and community representatives establish a shared agenda and measure progress at regular intervals.
- State educational attainment goals focus and organize myriad strategies related to workforce development and deployment, economic diversification and innovation, and promotion of diversity and inclusion.
- Nebraska is one of only four states that have not adopted an explicit numerical attainment goal (along with CA, DE, and NY). All of Nebraska's neighboring states and *Blueprint Nebraska* comparison states have established ambitious goals.
- A state educational attainment goal is in the spirit of and touches every aspect of the aspirations laid out in *Blueprint Nebraska's* 2030 vision for the state: job growth, quality of life, attracting and retaining young people, income growth, and growth in innovation.



**B. What should an attainment goal for Nebraska address?**

Setting an attainment goal that is not connected to Nebraska’s needs and circumstances is no better than having no goal. To help the state address its most pressing issues, as identified in *Blueprint Nebraska*, an educational attainment goal for Nebraska should:

- be linked to growing the workforce, especially in strategic areas of the economy,
- close persistent educational attainment gaps,
- demonstrate positive outcomes for individuals and businesses,
- addresses all geographic areas of Nebraska, and
- gain educator, business, and legislative support, culminating in a legislative resolution.

**II. Proposed Goal:**

**A. What’s a suitable goal for Nebraska?**

One widely used source for setting state attainment goals has been the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce’s (CEW) *Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements*, last published in 2013. The CEW projections estimate the percentage of jobs within a state that require some postsecondary training beyond high school, ranging from a certificate or industry credential with economic value through graduate degrees. The 2013 CEW estimates have been used by many states, including Iowa, which set its goal at 70%, and South Dakota, which set its goal at 65%. The CEW’s 2013 estimate for Nebraska was that 71% of Nebraska jobs would require at least some postsecondary education by 2020. An unpublished update provided to the Coordinating Commission in 2020 estimated that 73% of Nebraska jobs would require at least some postsecondary education by 2027 distributed across educational attainment levels as follows:

Education Level	2027 jobs	Share of jobs	Share rank among states
High school dropouts	66,000	6%	14
High school graduates	235,000	21%	42
Some college, no degree	188,000	17%	31
Associate’s degree	190,000	17%	6
Bachelor’s degree	321,000	28%	12
Graduate degree	134,000	12%	38
	1,134,000	100%	

Given CEW projections, an ambitious but achievable goal for Nebraska would be for 70% of Nebraskans aged 25 to 34 to have a postsecondary credential with economic value by 2030. This would include degrees, certificates, diplomas, and “some college, no degree” if “some college” yielded an industry-recognized credential.

**B. Why not set a goal for all working age adults?**

State attainment goals differ on whether they include all working age adults (generally defined as aged 25 to 64) or a younger cohort of working age adults. The proposed 70% attainment goal for Nebraska is limited to young workers for the following reasons:

- 25 to 34 year-olds are a large portion of the key demographic identified by *Blueprint Nebraska* (18 to 34 year-olds)

- As today’s 16 to 25 year-olds, they are the population cohort most likely to avail itself of postsecondary education and training in the near term and the most likely to be impacted by initiatives and improvements undertaken by schools, colleges, universities, and apprenticeship providers.
- The Lumina Foundation projects that achieving 70% attainment among 25 to 34 year-olds would, along with natural increases in attainment driven by aging, yield an attainment rate of over 60% for the Nebraska population aged 25 to 64 by 2030.

**C. How would a 70% goal compare to other states?**

A 70% by 2030 goal for Nebraskans aged 25 to 34 would put Nebraska in good company with surrounding states and nationally. The following tables put Nebraska in a regional and national context in terms of goals and the percentage of 25 to 64 year-olds who have attained a degree, certificate, or industry credential with economic value according to the Lumina Foundation.

**Regional Goals** *\*Proposed for NE*

State	Goal	2019 (Lumina, 25-64)
Colorado	66 x 2025 (25-34)	61.0
Minnesota	70 x 2025 (25-44)	59.0
North Dakota	65 x 2025	55.3
Kansas	60 x 2020	54.9
<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>70 x 2030 (25-34)*</b>	<b>54.9</b>
Wisconsin	60 x 2027	54.7
Iowa	70 x 2025	53.4
Wyoming	67 x 2025	51.6
South Dakota	65 x 2025 (25-34)	49.2
Missouri	60 x 2025	47.0
Oklahoma	70 x 2025	46.5

**Highest National Goals**

State	Goal	2019 (Lumina, 25-64)
Washington	70 x 2023 (25-44)	59.4
Minnesota	70 x 2025 (25-44)	59.0
Virginia	70 x 2030	57.4
Connecticut	70 x 2025 (AA+)	57.1
<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>70 x 2030 (25-34)*</b>	<b>54.9</b>
Iowa	70 x 2025	53.4
Rhode Island	70 x 2025 (AA+)	52.9
Vermont	70 x 2025	52.6
Wyoming	67 x 2025	51.6
Oregon	80 x 2025	51.0
Oklahoma	70 x 2025	46.5

**D. Where are we now?**

Measures of attainment are somewhat challenging. Census Bureau categories for postsecondary education include “some college, no degree,” associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, and graduate or professional degree. This is problematic for measuring short-term programs with workforce value because it combines certificates and diplomas that are below the associate’s degree into “some college, no degree,” which also includes students who began postsecondary education but who did not receive a credential of any sort. Nebraska’s community college alone award about 3,000 sub-associate-degree credentials each year. In addition, it may not include non-college credit certifications, apprenticeships outside of a college program, and military training in various occupational specialties.

To address this, various organizations, including the Lumina Foundation, the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, and the Census Bureau itself, have worked to develop

consistent cross-state measures of short-term credentials with workforce value. The Lumina Foundation’s estimate for Nebraska is that 6.8% of residents aged 25 to 64 had a short-term credential of value but not a degree in 2018.

The two tables below seek to present an accurate picture of the educational attainment of Nebraskans while acknowledging that short-term credential attainment does not have the precision of the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). The first table presents pooled 2015-2019 ACS data, which yields more stable estimates of attainment among small racial/ethnic groups.

Nebraska Attainment Rates by Race and Degree Type (25-34 Years)

Category	Total Population	Less than Assoc		Assoc+ %		BD+ %	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Total NE</b>	254,610	126,845	49.8%	127,765	50.2%	98,545	38.7%
White*	190,321	84,260	44.3%	106,061	55.7%	81,718	42.9%
Black*	15,371	10,119	65.8%	5,252	34.2%	3,693	24.0%
Hispanic	31,050	24,197	77.9%	6,853	22.1%	4,487	14.5%
Other*	17,868	8,269	46.3%	9,599	53.7%	8,647	48.4%

Note. \* = Non-Hispanic.

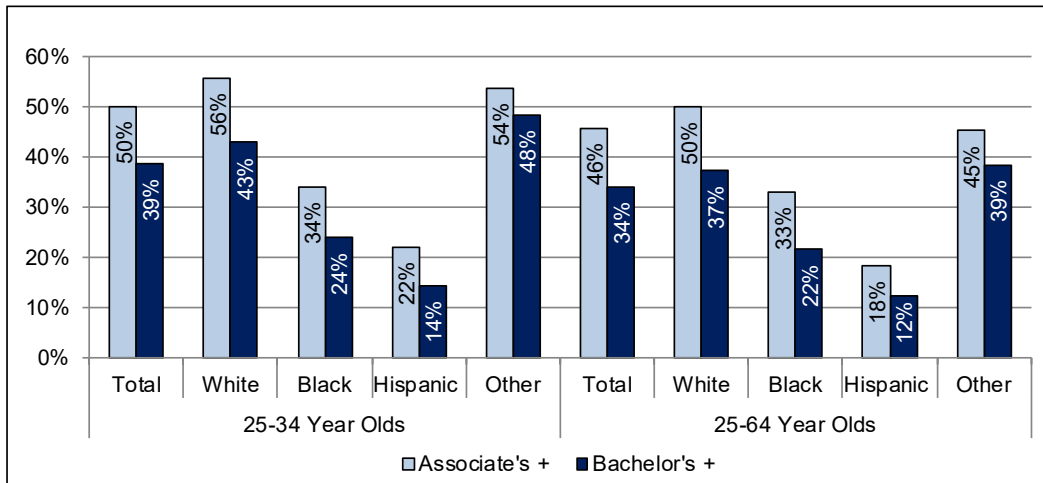
Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey PUMS file.

The second table adds the Lumina Foundation’s 6.8% short-term credential estimate to the ACS data to get an estimate of degree and short-term credential of value attainment. Using this measure, 57% of 25 to 34 year-old Nebraskans have a credential of value. Assuming the age cohort population remains about the same by 2030, Nebraska colleges and universities and other grantors of reputable, quality credentials would need to award 33,099 additional credentials over the next nine years, or about 3,678 extra credentials per year. Nebraska postsecondary institutions award an average of about 23,000 undergraduate degrees and certificate each year out of about 31,000 total degrees and certificates each year.

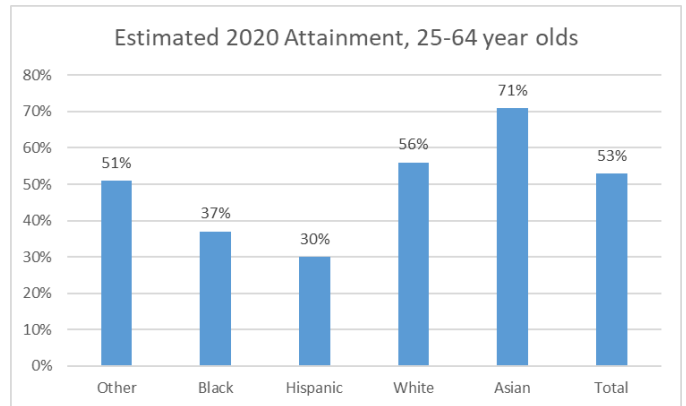
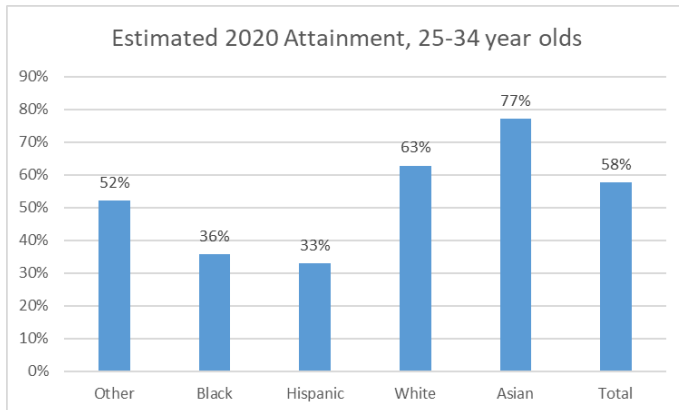
Current Attainment Gap	
2015-2019 Pooled ACS Population 24 to 35	254,610
70% Attainment Goal	178,227
Current Associate's Plus Attainment (50.2%)	127,814
Assume 6.8% short-term credentials	17,313
Total current attainment = 57%	145,128
Total additional degrees and credentials needed	33,099
Additional credentials needed each year from 2021	3,678

**E. Equity Focus**

Achieving a 70% goal will require a strong focus on equity. There is far too much undeveloped potential in Nebraska. As a result of high school graduation, college continuation, and college graduation rates that vary widely by income, race/ethnicity, and gender, there are significant differences in postsecondary attainment across groups of Nebraskans – in fact, Nebraska has the third highest attainment gap in the country (25.7%) between non-Hispanic whites and persons of color aged 25-44.



The differences are evident in the chart above, based on pooled five-year (2015-2019) American Community Survey data from the U.S. Census, and in the Lumina Foundation’s 2020 estimates below (*A Stronger Nation, Goal Exploration Tool*), which use one-year ACS survey data and include estimates of sub-associate’s degree credentials.



In order to reach 70% among 25 to 34 year-olds, the attainment rates of white, non-Hispanics will need to exceed 70%, the rates for Asian-Americans will need to increase to above 80%, and the rates for Latinos and African-Americans will need to reach about 55%. Increasing the attainment rate for Latino/as and African-Americans aged 25 to 34 by 2030 would be a challenging but worthy goal and accomplishment.

### III. Possible Action Steps

1. Pass a legislative resolution declaring that it is a goal of the state that 70% of 25 to 34 year-old Nebraskans have a degree, certificate, diploma, or other postsecondary or industry-recognized credential with economic value by 2030.
2. The resolution should acknowledge the role that all of Nebraska's diverse schools, colleges, and universities – public and private -- will play in achieving the 70% attainment goal and the responsibility of employers and producers to partner with the education community.
3. The resolution should recommend that postsecondary governing boards, the State Board of Education, the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, and other education and civic associations and organizations signal their support for the attainment goal publicly in some fashion.
4. The resolution should recommend that the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education incorporate the statewide attainment goal into the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education (Neb. Rev. Stat. 85-1413) and make it a focal point of the progress report that is required to be transmitted annually to the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee (Neb. Rev. Stat. 85-1429).
5. The resolution should emphasize the importance to all Nebraskans of closing the educational attainment gap and set a goal to increase minority educational attainment of a degree or credential of value by at least 20 percentage points – into the mid-50s for 25 to 34-year olds-- by 2030.
6. The resolution should include statements of intent/encouragement directed at the education community writ large, focused on intermediate steps known to increase postsecondary credential attainment that can be measured statewide on an annual basis without imposing additional data collections burdens, perhaps including the following (NOT an exhaustive list):
  - Declare it a state priority that at least 90% of high school students from all income and racial/ethnic backgrounds graduate from high school within four years of starting.
  - Suggest that the high schools, postsecondary institutions, and NDE work together to ensure that students across the state have equal access to sufficient dual credit – including CTE -- opportunities to enter postsecondary education or the workforce with at least (12 or 15) college credits and/or workforce certifications sought by employers.
  - Direct NDE and the CCPE, in cooperation with high schools, postsecondary institutions, and civic organizations, to explore ways to increase FAFSA completions, particularly at high schools with FAFSA completion rates below 50%.
  - Encourage expansion of creative partnerships between postsecondary institutions and high schools, such as the Nebraska Math Pathways project, to ensure that students are prepared to enter college ready to succeed in college-level courses.
  - Encourage high schools and postsecondary institutions, with the assistance of the business community and other stakeholders, to increase the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who stay in Nebraska for college to 85% and to take steps to maximize the enrollment of non-resident students as a means of meeting Nebraska's need for a larger and better educated workforce.
  - In partnership with the business community, focus on enrolling and graduating more STEM majors, including agriculture majors, to meet the needs of Nebraska employers and strategic state economic initiatives.

- In partnership with the business community and non-profit employers, set a goal that all postsecondary students who seek an internship, apprenticeship, or career exploration opportunity have that opportunity on their way to gaining a degree or other postsecondary or occupational credential.
- Encourage colleges and universities to maximize the amount of military occupational training and other competency-based learning that can be applied to specific programs of study to reduce the time it takes to earn a credential.
- Encourage colleges and universities to maximize the use of reverse transfer, stackable credentials, and prior learning assessment to help adults with some college but no degree complete a degree or credential that improves their ability to obtain employment and promotions.
- Encourage NSWERS to provide annual information on the employment of recent college graduates in Nebraska and their career trajectories over five to ten years.