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State News Summary: Nebraska

College Affordability Continues to Erode in Nebraska

San Jose, Calif., and Washington, D.C. — Nebraska students and their families are now devoting more of their income to pay for college costs. Since the late 1990s, the share of family income, even after student financial aid, needed to pay for college expenses at public four-year institutions has increased from 21 percent to 27 percent.

Poor and working-class families must devote 37 percent of their income to pay for net college costs at public four-year colleges and universities. (Net college costs equal tuition, room, and board minus financial aid.)

In addition, there are substantial gaps in college opportunities in the state. Among young adults, for example, 23 percent of Hispanics are enrolled in college, compared with 42 percent of whites.

These are among the major findings of *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education*, released today by the independent, nonpartisan National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. According to the report:

- Fifty-six percent of college students in Nebraska complete a bachelor's degree within six years of enrolling—and this percentage has increased over the decade. However, 43 percent of Hispanics graduate with a bachelor's degree within six years, compared with 58 percent of whites.
- Eleven percent of Hispanics have a bachelor's degree, compared with 32 percent of whites.
- Eighth graders perform well on national assessments in math, science, and reading, indicating that many students are being prepared for college. However, scores in math have declined over the decade.

- Sixty-one percent of Hispanics have a high school credential, compared with 94 percent of whites—one of the largest gaps in the nation.

“With the current challenges of a competitive global economy, states need to raise the level of education of their population to help their residents compete,” said Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center. “The purpose of *Measuring Up 2008* is to identify the key areas where states can improve.”

Measuring Up 2008 grades all 50 states in six overall areas of higher education performance, based on quantitative measures. Grades are calculated by comparing each state’s performance with that of the best states—defined as the median of the top five states. The report also identifies gaps in college opportunity and achievement by ethnic/racial groups within each state, as well as identifying each state’s improvements or declines on key indicators since the early 1990s.

Nebraska’s Grades:

Preparation:	B–
Participation:	B
Affordability:	F
Completion:	B+
Benefits:	B
Learning:	I

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

Measuring Up 2008 includes a national report and 50 state reports. The national report offers a summary of the nation’s current performance, and improvements or declines since the early 1990s. The state reports provide a detailed picture of higher education in each state. *Measuring Up 2008* is the latest in a series of higher education report cards that began in 2000.

Upon release of the report card on Dec. 3, 2008, the national and state reports will be available at www.highereducation.org. The Web site also offers state-by-state comparisons, as well as technical information about methodology.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education promotes policies that enhance Americans’ opportunities to pursue and achieve a quality higher education. Established in 1998, the National Center is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. It is not associated with any institution of higher education, with any political party, or with any government agency.

(Please note: *Measuring Up 2008* is embargoed until Wednesday, Dec. 3. The findings of the report cannot appear before December 3.)