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State News Summary: Washington

Washington's College Opportunities Not Up to Par, Particularly for Minorities

San Jose, Calif., and Washington, D.C. — Young Washington residents are less likely to enroll in college than their peers in other states, an indication that the state is not educating its young population to the level needed in a competitive economy. Twenty-nine percent of young adults (ages 18 to 24) in Washington are enrolled in college, compared with 44 percent in the best-performing states.

In addition, there are substantial gaps in college opportunities in the state. For example, 51 percent of Hispanic college students complete a bachelor's degree within six years of enrolling, compared with 65 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:

- Washington's financial aid to low-income students has increased substantially since the early 1990s. Nonetheless, college affordability has eroded. Poor and working-class families must devote 36 percent of their income, even after financial aid, to pay for costs at two-year colleges.
- Sixteen percent of young Hispanics (ages 18 to 24) are enrolled in college, compared with 36 percent of whites.
- Eleven percent of Hispanics have a bachelor's degree, compared with 34 percent of whites.
- Small proportions of high school students score well on Advanced Placement tests and college entrance exams, indicating that students are not being prepared for college.
- Sixty-six percent of Hispanics have a high school credential, compared with 91 percent of whites.

“With demographic changes already transforming the U.S. workforce, states need to close the gaps in educational performance to help their residents compete in a global economy,” 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.

Washington’s Grades:

Preparation:	C+
Participation:	D
Affordability:	F
Completion:	A–
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.)

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