Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Program Inventory

January 2015

Prepared by

McDowell Group

Prepared for

Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network

With support from

Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education

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Executive Summary

The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) contracted with McDowell Group, a research and consulting firm based in Juneau and Anchorage, to prepare this report for the Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network (the Network). The report contains an overview of Alaska's postsecondary access and completion field; a review of demographic and educational data relating to postsecondary access and completion; results from a survey of Alaska postsecondary access and completion programs; a summary of executive interviews with stakeholders in the field; a summary of policies affecting postsecondary access and completion; and recommendations for ongoing development of the field of access and completion in Alaska. Following are key findings of the study.

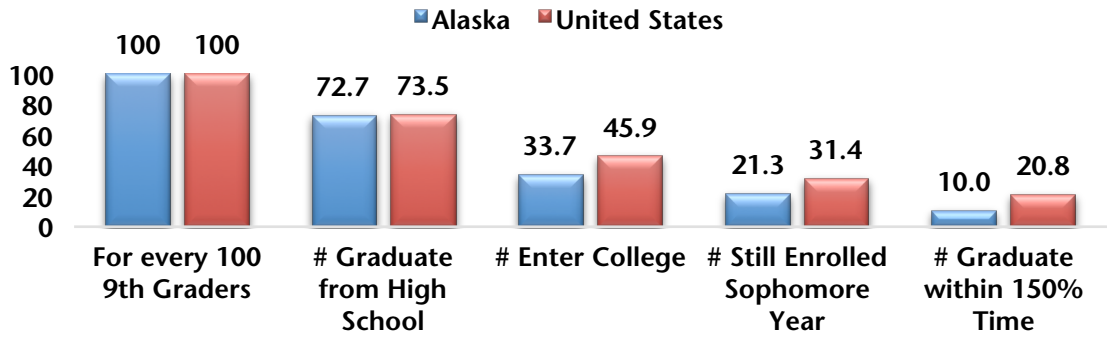
Alaska's Postsecondary Environment

- Alaska ranks 47th in the nation for percentage of adults ages 25 to 34 with a Bachelor's degree or higher. Only about one-third of Alaskans (36 percent) earn an academic degree beyond high school. On average, however, it takes Alaskans longer to complete degree programs than the overall U.S. population, and Alaskans are more likely to start a degree, then not complete it (29 percent, versus 21 percent nationwide).[1]

- Out of every 100 9th graders in Alaska, only 10 will graduate from college with either an associate's or bachelor's degree within 150 percent of the nominal program-time for the degree, compared to 21 percent, nationwide (see chart, below).[2]

- Among those enrolled in two-year programs, Alaskan students are less than half as likely to return for their second year (24 versus 54 percent nationally). The difference is less pronounced, but still significant, among those in four-year programs: 63 versus 77 percent.[3]

Figure ES-1. Alaska and United States Grade 9-20 Education Pipeline, 2010



Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)

[1] American Community Survey
[2] National Center for Education Statistics
[3] Ibid

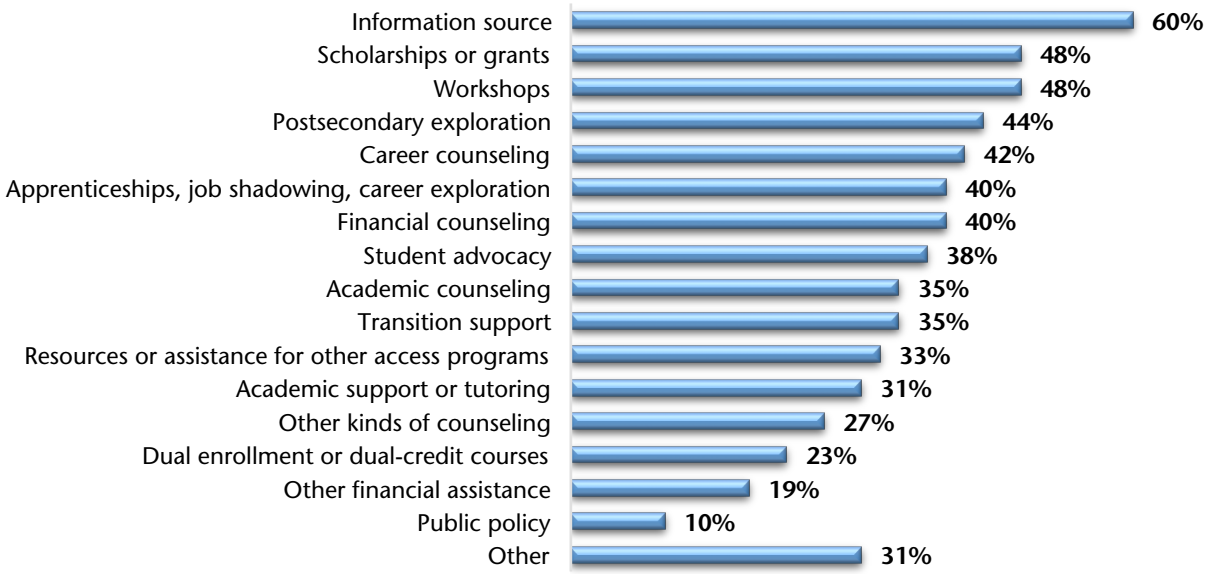
Alaska is one of nine states for which the percentage of adults 25 to 64 who have earned a college degree (associate and higher) declined between 2000 and 2011 (by 5.1 percent).[4]

Program Survey Results

An online survey was distributed to 54 postsecondary access and completion programs. A total of 40 programs responded; the study team gathered public information on eight more programs. Thirteen of the programs are associated with the State of Alaska and 24 with the University of Alaska. The remainder are school district programs, national programs, or operated by independent nonprofit organizations. In addition to the results presented below, program directors provided information on budget, staffing, program mission, measurements of success, strengths and challenges, targeted populations, and more.

- Surveyed programs offer a wide array of services. The most common were information-source (60 percent), scholarships/grants (48 percent), workshops (48 percent), and postsecondary exploration (44 percent).

Postsecondary Access and Completion Program Services



- Surveyed programs were most likely to target high school students (71 percent) and those aged 18 to 24 (65 percent). The least-targeted age groups were grades 6-8 (25 percent) and Kindergarten through grade 5 (6 percent).

- Although one-third of programs said they serve people ages 35 and older, only 6 percent (3 programs) said they have specific strategies or initiatives for people changing careers and people re-entering the workforce.

[4] NCHEMS

- The definitions that programs use for their own success vary widely. Fewer than half the respondents said they use attainment of a postsecondary degree or certificate as a definition of success.
- Many programs say they need more reliable funding and many could use more staff. Another challenge is developing productive relationships with individual university campuses, key faculty, school districts and other stakeholders. Attracting students is an issue for some programs.
- Respondents said the types of support their programs most need are marketing (including online and social media), networking opportunities (with many different stakeholder groups), staff development (interpersonal and technical skills), and more financial resources. A common theme was the need for more and better outcome data for program planning and evaluation.

Executive Interviews

The study team interviewed 26 stakeholders in Alaska's postsecondary access and completion field, including many Network members. The interviews explored challenges facing the field, strategies and best practices, service gaps, various policies that impact access and completion, and communication/collaboration opportunities and priorities.

- Many contacts said the main challenge to raising Alaska's rates of postsecondary access and completion is Alaska's lack of a college-going culture. Students, and even parents, do not understand that entry-level jobs available without postsecondary training often offer little upward mobility and that postsecondary degrees and certifications broaden career options and provide much better financial returns over time. These perceptions contribute to Alaska's high rate of students who enter postsecondary programs but do not complete them.
- Another misperception is that "postsecondary" necessarily means a four-year degree, when it encompasses a wide range of certificates, licenses, vocational/technical training, and more. Contacts said there is a great need for today's students to understand all their available options and to begin their financial and academic planning early.
- Underlying many of the interview comments, and survey results as well, are the inherent challenges of Alaska's size, geography and socioeconomic complexity. Many contacts talked about tailoring access and completion services to individual student needs, while acknowledging that those needs are many-layered and that program delivery can be a complex logistical exercise.
- The interviews reinforced survey results that highlight a need for more and better measurement of program impacts for the access and completion field in Alaska.

Availability of career education and technical education at the secondary level was described as useful for students because it helps them identify career paths.

Several contacts advocated for "hands-on" or "high-touch" programs that stress one-on-one interaction with students.

Interviewees stressed the need for a continuum of comprehensive services that support the student within and outside the education system. This includes starting with students' early development and thinking of elementary and secondary education as a process that culminates not with high school graduation, but with transition to postsecondary training.

Recommendations

The study team developed the following recommendations based on results from all the study tasks, including environmental research, survey research, policy inventory, and executive interviews. Please see the final chapter of the study for additional detail on the recommendations.

A. Expand efforts to promote partnering and networking among access and completion programs and between those programs and other key stakeholders and institutions. Building a more strategically aligned and coordinated field should be a precursor to "scaling up" particular strategies or programs, with the exception of proven scholarship programs. This includes developing common definitions for key terms and a complementary vision of what "success" means with respect to access and completion.

B. Engage with school districts, government, employers, and other stakeholders to help build an Alaskan culture that supports postsecondary educational aspirations for all students. This complex, ongoing task begins with a common vision of postsecondary education as the natural and expected culmination of a process that begins in kindergarten. It requires coordinated strategies and messaging.

C. Work with school districts to raise the level of preparation for postsecondary education among high school graduates. This step follows logically from the one above and requires common definitions of what it means to be "postsecondary-ready" with respect to major types of career goals.

D. Assess the extent to which access and completion programs are able to meet the needs of older students (especially those 35 and older with some college but no degree) who want to return to school to pursue postsecondary goals. These students typically face special challenges balancing the time and financial commitments of school and home life or needing, for example, refresher or prerequisite courses before entering a degree program.

E. Encourage completion of the Alaska Statewide Longitudinal Data System (known as "ANSWERS"), now in development to support planning and evaluation. ANSWERS is a multi-agency initiative to integrate educational, financial aid, and workforce data from early education through postsecondary and into the workforce.

F. Continue to explore and clarify broad program priorities and goals within the access and completion field. This includes how programs aimed at different levels of the educational ladder work together to form a continuum of services and what their common goals should be. Common terminology for key strategies and conditions and consistent information about, for example, the requirements of scholarship programs will help support this clarification process.

G. Actively support expansion of reliable broadband Internet access to every Alaska community. This is a key step toward giving all Alaska students the same level of opportunity, not just for postsecondary success, but for career and personal success.

Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

Postsecondary education is widely recognized as key to individual success and to America's international competitiveness. Access and completion programs work to make postsecondary education more available to all and to help students who enter postsecondary institutions reach their goals. The cost of postsecondary failure is high, and not only in lost income to the student. In Alaska, state and local grants and appropriations to educate first-year, full-time, degree-seeking college students who do not begin a second year total nearly $14 million annually.[5]

As in many other states, postsecondary access and completion programs in Alaska have recognized they could have more impact if they were more aware of each other and better coordinated. Further, information that is available about the programs to the general public is sometimes dated or fragmented, making it difficult for students, families, counselors, and teachers to understand the options and resources available and the steps students must take to make use of them. This recognition led to formation of the Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network and to development of this inventory.

Methodology

Alaska Demographic and Educational Profile

This report includes an Alaska statistical profile consisting of state demographic trends, public school enrollment, secondary school performance, student performance, and college and vocational enrollment and completion statistics. Data sources include the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), the U.S. Census, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), the National Center for Education Statistics, the Chronicle of Higher Education College Completion, and Illinois State University's Grapevine Center for the Study of Education Policy.

Executive Interviews

The study team conducted a total of 26 executive interviews with stakeholders in Alaska's postsecondary access and completion field. Attempts were made to contact all Network members (as of the commencement of the project), although a few were unavailable. ACPE staff and other interviewees suggested additional interview subjects. The study team and ACPE staff developed the interview protocol, which covered a wide variety of topics, including availability and accessibility of programs, challenges and gaps in services, strategies and best practices, communications and collaboration, funding, messaging, and policies that affect access and completion.

The following individuals were interviewed:

[5] American Institutes for Research. http://www.collegemeasures.org/four-year_colleges/state/AK/compare-colleges/cost-of-attrition/

Wanetta Ayers	Division Director	DOLWD
Pearl Brower	President	Ilisagvik College
Stephanie Butler	Director of Operations	ACPE
Kathleen Castle	Executive Director	Construction Education Foundation
Elizabeth Congdon-McGee	Advocacy & Public Policy Chair	Alaska School Counselor Association
Eric Gebhart	Superintendent	Nenana City School District
Mary Gower	Director	UA, Enrollment Services
Lacy Karpilo	Associate Vice Chancellor	UAA, Student Affairs
Cathy LeCompte	Associate Dean	UAA, Community & Technical College
Luisa Machuca	Vice President	Kawerak Inc.
Rebekah Matrosova	Director of Outreach & Early Awareness	ACPE
Kacey Miller	Student Services Manager	UAF, Northwest Campus
Kathy Moffitt	Alaska Middle College Program Administrator	Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Joe Nelson	Vice Chancellor	UAS, Enrollment Management & Student Affairs
Saichi Oba	Associate Vice President	UA, Student & Enrollment Services
John O'Brien	Director of Secondary Education	Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
Lael Oldmixon	Executive Director	UA College Savings Plan & UA Scholars
Lisa Parady	Executive Director	Alaska Council of School Administrators
Eric Pedersen	Associate Vice Chancellor	UAA, Enrollment Management
Bill Popp	President & CEO	Anchorage Economic Development Corp.
Joe Reeves	Executive Director	Alaska Association of School Boards
Brenda Riley	Executive Director	Fairbanks Children's Museum
Moriah Sallaffie		Bering Strait Native Corporation
June Sobocinski	Vice President	United Way of Anchorage
Dana Thomas	Vice President	UA, Academic Affairs
Fred Villa	Associate Vice President	UA Workforce Programs
Carol Wren	Shareholder Development Manager	Bristol Bay Native Corporation

Program Survey

TARGET PROGRAMS

A survey was distributed to 54 postsecondary access and completion programs identified by Network members, through interviews, and by online research. Statewide scholarship programs, such as the UA Scholars Program and the Alaska Performance Scholarship, were included. Organizations that provide scholarships locally or regionally were not included unless they also engage in broader access and completion efforts beyond financial aid alone. National organizations were included only if they work through an Alaska representative, such as Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO Alaska), or agency, such as the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

SURVEY FIELDING

The survey was programmed on a dedicated website with a 24-hour helpline. ACPE distributed email invitations to the 54 organizations. Organizations that did not immediately respond received two email reminders. Organizations that still did not respond were called and offered the option to complete the survey over the telephone. The survey was launched on September 30, 2014 and remained open for three weeks. Forty organizations responded to the survey. The study team was able to gather some public information on an additional eight programs. Descriptive information is therefore available for 48 organizations. Data from other portions of the survey represents between 35 and 40 respondents, depending on the number of answers received for a particular question.

SURVEY CONTENT

Survey questions were developed by the study team in consultation with ACPE. The survey asked respondents to provide a wide array of information including mission, target populations, staffing, budgets, types of services, regions served, program goals, success rates, strengths and challenges, and best practices.

Readers should note that the survey sample was selected to represent as complete a cross-section as possible of the Alaska access and completion field. Survey responses are therefore broadly representative. Because this is not a random (statistical) sample, however, there are no margins-of-error or confidence intervals associated with the answers.

Inventory Contents

The program database developed by McDowell Group for the study has been conveyed to the Network for future use and analysis. Data from the online program survey consists of two types. Some will be available to the public through the Network in the form of an electronic "directory" that includes specific information about individual programs. Other data was analyzed for strategic purposes and is reported only in group totals or with respect to specific themes and findings.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION

- Program name and the agency or organization that houses the program, if applicable
- Type of program (e.g., awareness, dual-enrollment, transition, etc.) and program mission
- Types of services provided (e.g., scholarships, apprenticeships, academic support, career counseling)
- Target grades or demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, income level, military, career-changers)
- Areas of geographic focus
- Years of operation
- Numbers of clients served

INFORMATION ABOUT STRATEGIC ISSUES

The report includes analysis of interview and survey results pertaining to the following strategic issues:

- Program strengths, challenges and best practices
- Program goals and measurement
- Gaps in services provided by programs
- Communications and collaboration among programs
- Program funding for access and completion
- Public messaging about access and completion
- Public policies affecting access and completion

Overview of Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Environment

Overview of Alaska Higher Education

Alaska has long recognized the need for robust systems of higher education, including both academic and vocational degree and certification programs. Alaska's first school of higher education opened in 1922 on the site of what is now the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) with funding and land provided by the U.S. Congress. The facility was called the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines, and its instruction and research focused on those areas.

Within a decade, the institution's offerings had expanded to include liberal arts, science, and engineering. In 1935, the name was changed to the University of Alaska. The new university continued to grow and awarded its first PhD in 1955. Today, UAF encompasses seven major research units and is the administrative hub for seven other regional campuses: Bristol Bay Campus (Dillingham), Chukchi Campus (Kotzebue), Interior-Aleutians Campus (administered in Fairbanks but serving multiple communities), Kuskokwim Campus (Bethel), Northwest Campus (Nome) and the UAF Community and Technical College in Fairbanks.

Meanwhile, in 1954 the Anchorage Community College (ACC) was founded at Elmendorf Air Force Base. The University of Alaska, Anchorage Senior College (ASC) began operating in the late 1960s and provided upper division and graduate programs to complement ACC's lower division college. ASC became a four-year university in 1977 and in 1987 merged with ACC to become what is now the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). Other former community colleges that are now part of the UAA system include Kodiak College, Kenai Peninsula College, Matanuska-Susitna College, and Prince William Sound Community College. UAA also operates Eagle River Campus and the Joint Base Elmendorf/Richardson Extension Centers.

The third major component of Alaska's University System, University of Alaska Southeast, was also established in 1987 by means of a restructuring of what were then known as the University of Alaska Juneau, Ketchikan Community College, and Islands Community College in Sitka. Together the University of Alaska campuses serve 33,000 students statewide with both academic and vocational programs.

Other colleges in Alaska include Ilisagvik College, the state's only tribal college; Alaska Pacific University, a private, four-year university in Anchorage; Alaska Bible College in Palmer; Charter College, a two-year for-profit career-training institution with campuses in Anchorage and Wasilla as well as in California and Washington State; Alaska Career College; Alaska Christian College; and Wayland Baptist University.

In addition to the technical and vocational programs offered by the state's universities, Alaska has well over 100 career, trade and vocational training providers. Some are statewide or regional nonprofit organizations such AVTEC (Alaska's Institute of Technology) in Seward, Yuut Elitnaurviat in Bethel, and Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Education Center in Nome. Others are associated with union apprenticeship programs or business associations, and still others are private businesses. These training organizations offer hundreds of different certifications and credentials as well as refresher courses, job-readiness training, and other services.

Alaska Educational Attainment

According to figures prepared by the National Center for Higher Education Management (NCHEMS) Alaska is next to last in the nation in awarding undergraduate credentials per capita to 18-34 year-olds. Only 69 percent of freshmen at Alaska public, four-year universities re-enroll for their second year compared to 78 percent nationally. While the percentage of graduations within 3 years from two-year programs in Alaska is comparable to national rates, the percentage of students at public Alaska universities who graduate from a four-year program within six years is less than half the national average. Finally, NCHEMS estimates that by 2020, 66 percent of jobs in Alaska will require postsecondary education, but currently just 47 percent of working-age Alaskans hold a postsecondary certificate or higher.

Role of Postsecondary Access and Completion Programs

Alaska's geographic location and complex cultural landscape create both challenges and opportunities for postsecondary education. To help address these, organizations and agencies have developed a variety of access and completion programs and services. For purposes of this study, the term "postsecondary" is defined as *a program serving students with a high school diploma or the equivalent that culminate in an academic degree or an occupational or professional certification of some kind.*

Postsecondary access and completion programs typically provide one or more of the following services:

- Awareness program
- Transition/bridge program
- Financial aid program
- Completion program
- Dual enrollment/exchange program
- Alaska education and workforce data source/educator resource

Programs surveyed for this report also engaged in leadership development, volunteerism, and several other related strategies. For some access and completion programs, the mission focus is on one of these types of services. Most programs, however, engage in more than one strategy; for example working to make students aware of postsecondary options and also to facilitate transition from high school to a postsecondary program, possibly in conjunction with access to financial aid. Some programs provide multiple services but to a single student population, for example, business, construction, healthcare, or law students. Some programs focus on Alaska Native students, and some target low-income students.

Programs also work at different levels of the educational ladder. Some begin as early as 2nd or 3rd grade, others work with middle-school or high school students, and some work only with students already in a postsecondary program.

Institutional Affiliation of Access and Completion Programs

Primary Program Affiliations

The majority of programs in Alaska are operated within either the University of Alaska (UA) or by state government through ACPE and the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). The remainder are either independent nonprofits, associated with a school district, or nationally affiliated.

Related Efforts

Many organizations, from Rotary Clubs to behavioral health services, provide some form of financial or other support to students. Among the major types of organizations not defined as access and completion programs for purposes of this study, but nevertheless involved in activities related to the field, are ANCSA corporations; regional, Alaska Native nonprofit and cultural heritage organizations; and Community Development Quota Groups.

ANCSA Corporations

Virtually all of Alaska's ANCSA corporations (regional and village corporations) provide scholarship funding that may be used for either academic or vocational/technical postsecondary education. Many also support leadership development, internships, culture camps, and other activities that, at least in part, contribute to postsecondary access and completion. ANCSA corporations are not included in this inventory, however. As for-profit corporations, their primary access and completion role has been to fund scholarships and other efforts, rather than to become directly involved in programs with access and completion goals.

Regional Nonprofit and Cultural Organizations

Alaska's regional, Alaska Native nonprofits engage in a wide variety of health, social, cultural, and educational programs and typically fund scholarships. Most or all these organizations also have programs that indirectly support access and completion with services that range from literacy classes to culture camps. For example, Cook Inlet Tribal Council partners with the Anchorage School District to offer Alaska Native students culturally responsive core academic classes and support services. The Alaska Youth Academy, a program of Tanana Chiefs Conference, is included in this inventory. It provides a comprehensive introduction to law enforcement careers for youth between the ages of 15 and 18 and allows them to earn certificates in related disciplines such as First Aid/CPR and firearms safety. In Southeast Alaska, Sealaska Heritage Institute operates several educational programs designed to support secondary and postsecondary success.

Community Development Quota (CDQ) Groups

Congress established Alaska's six CDQ groups in 1992 to help coastal, fisheries-dependent communities engage more profitably in Alaska's fishing industry by conveying to the groups a portion of the catch in key fisheries. The CDQ groups operate various fisheries businesses for the benefit of the communities they represent, and in doing so they engage in various types of workforce development. CDQ groups typically have an education/training director on staff, and all six groups provide scholarships and training grants. Some also provide student internships and other youth development programs.

Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF), for example offers a Youth-to-Work program that emphasizes "soft skills," self-respect and respect for others and a youth leadership program that includes opportunities to attend college and career fairs around the state. Aleutian and Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA) offers various education opportunities, including internships in its own subsidiaries and in partner businesses and other organizations. Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC) offers a summer camp for middle school and high school students that includes fisheries management and biology classes and provides college credit. Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (CBSFA) has supported curriculum development for local schools as well as providing various camps and other educational activities for elementary and secondary students. Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA) and Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) focus mainly on scholarships and vocational training.

Like ANCSA corporations, CDQ groups are not primarily concerned with postsecondary access and completion, and for this reason are not included in the program inventory. However, their dual business and community development orientations make them good potential partners for the access and completion field in Alaska.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board

The State of Alaska's lead planning and coordinating entity for workforce development is the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). While the AWIB does not provide access and completion programming, it oversees state and federally funded job training and vocational education programs statewide and works to see that training resources are aligned with employment trends and emerging occupations. AWIB sector-strategies include healthcare, construction, transportation, oil and gas, maritime, and integrated workforce development. Board members are appointed by the governor and represent business, industry, education, organized labor, and state government.

Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network

The Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network is a diverse group of education leaders from across Alaska formed in November 2013 to:

> *…build and strengthen partnerships to act collectively to improve postsecondary outcomes for all Alaskans. The goal of the network is to increase the number of credentialed workers in Alaska. The network aims to reduce duplication of effort and create synergy among service providers, support professional development, strengthen public messaging, and conduct and disseminate relevant research.*

The Network's mission statement:

> *Increase the percentage of all Alaskans who complete postsecondary education, particularly credentials relevant to a robust Alaskan economy.*

The Network's goal statement:

Increase the percentage of working-age Alaskans with a postsecondary credential to 65 percent by 2025.

Major Network strategies include:

- Partner communication
- Professional development and networking
- Statewide messaging
- Research and data collection

The Network is currently organized under the auspices of the ACPE and funded by the U.S. College Access Challenge Grant program with support from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Network participants meet approximately six times per year to develop a range of initiatives.

Alaska Demographic and Educational Profile

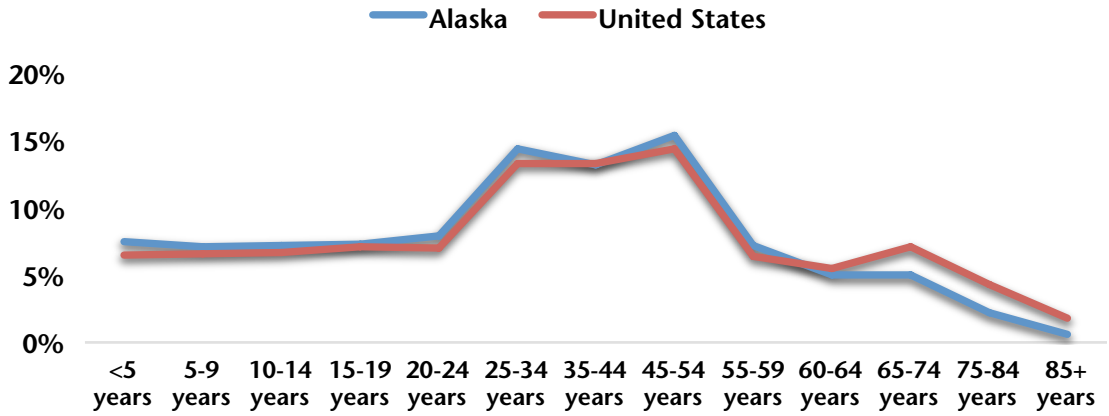
This section of the report includes data on Alaska's current and projected demographics, school enrollment, educational attainment, and college affordability. When available, Alaska's data is compared to national data.

Demographic Trends

Age

According to the ACS 2008-2012 Five-Year Average, although Alaska's age distribution follows the general trend of the nation, the state has a slightly higher percentage of the population under age 25 (37 percent versus 35 percent), and a lower percentage of the population over age 55 (20 percent versus 25 percent) compared to the United States. The median age of Alaska is 3.4 years lower than the nation's: 33.8 years compared to 37.2 years.

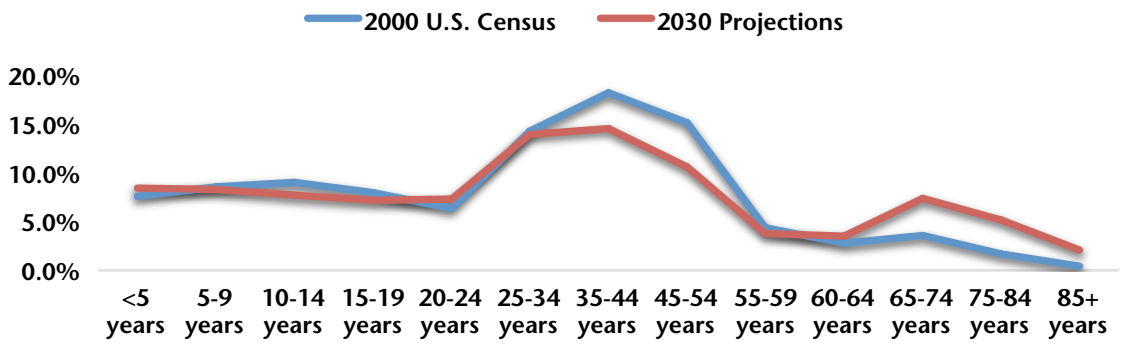
Figure 1. Alaska and United States Age Distribution, by Percent, 2008-2012 Five-Year Average



Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Average.

According to the U.S. Census' 2030 population projections, Alaska's population will continue to increase in age. In 2030, nearly one-fifth (18.2 percent) of the state's population is projected to be over the age of 60, compared to 8.5 percent in 2000. During this time, the state population is expected to grow 38 percent, much higher than the United States' projected growth of 29 percent during that same time period.

Figure 2. Alaska Population Projections Age Distribution, Percent, 2000 U.S. Census and 2030 Population Projections

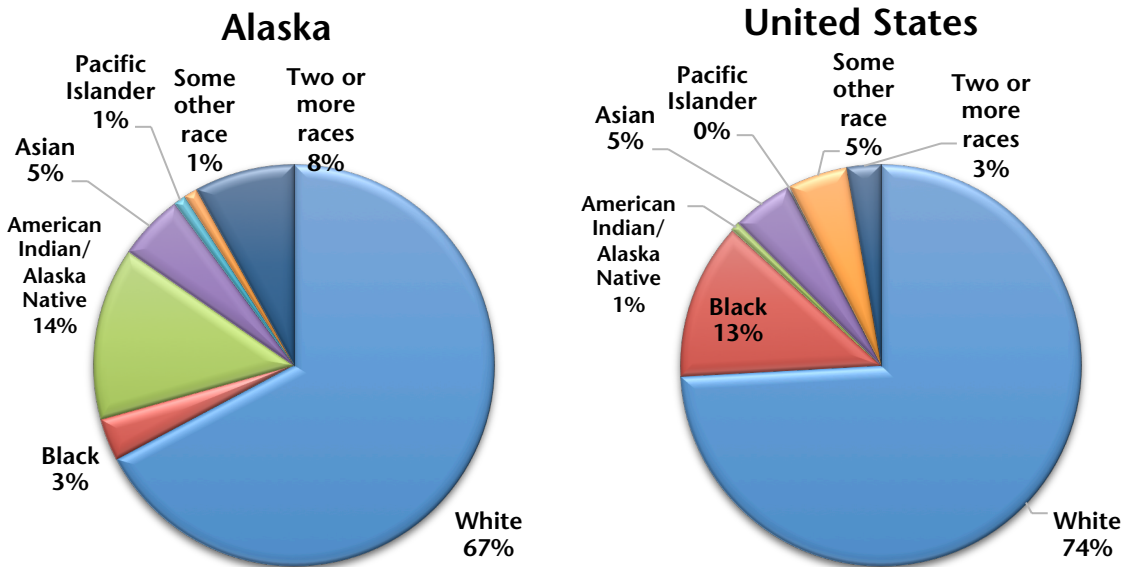


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Race

Alaska's population (2008-2012 average) is 67 percent white; 14 percent American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut; 5 percent Asian; 3 percent black; 1 percent Pacific Islander; and 9 percent other or more than one race. Compared to the U.S. population, Alaska's population is less likely to be white (67 versus 74 percent); much more likely to be American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut (14 versus 1 percent); and much less likely to be black (3 versus 13 percent).

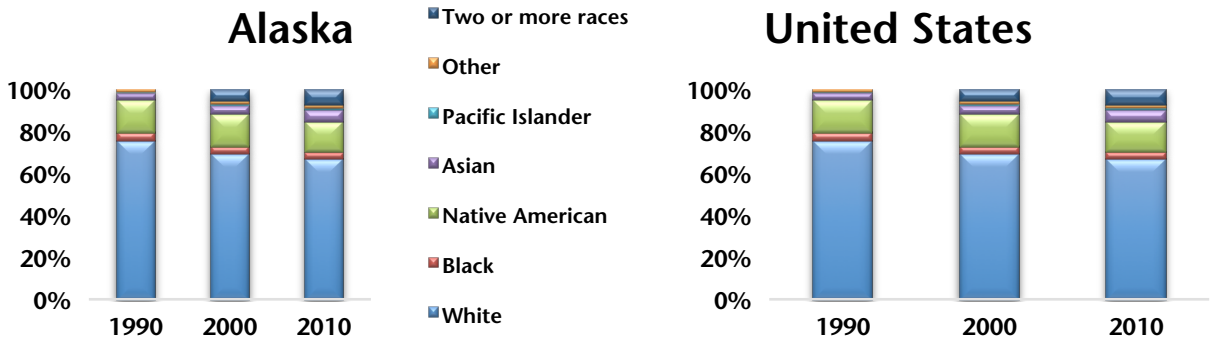
Figure 3. Alaska and United States Racial Composition, by Percent, 2008-2012 Five-Year Average



Note: May not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Average.

The percentage of the population that identifies as white has decreased over the past 20 years in both the state and in the nation, while the rest of the races combined have increased. Alaska's white population dropped from 76 percent in 1990; to 69 percent in 2000; to 67 percent in 2010. The nationwide white population dropped from 80 percent in 1990; to 75 percent in 2000; to 72 percent in 2010. Most of Alaska's non-white population increase occurred in the "two or more races" category, from zero in 2000 (when this category was not an option), to 5 percent in 2000, to 7 percent in 2010.

Figure 4. Alaska and United States Racial Composition, 1990, 2000, and 2010



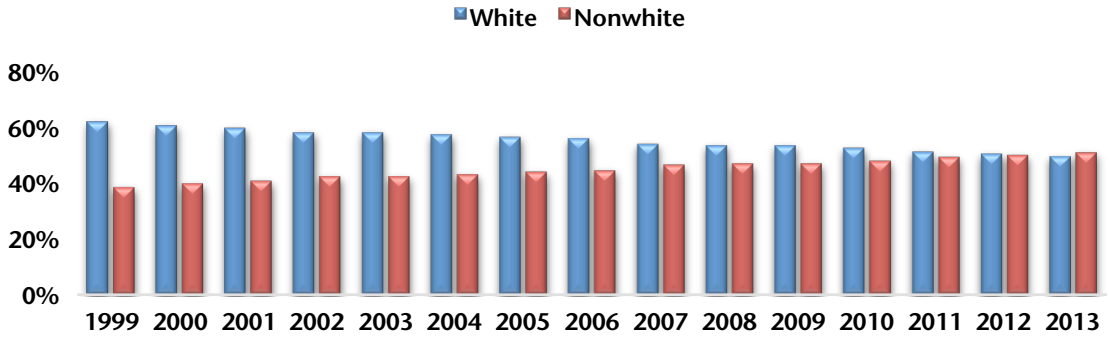
Note: In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau added the option to choose more than one race; the percentages are "Race alone" for each category.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Public School Enrollment

Race

Non-whites have gradually come to represent a greater share of public school students than whites in Alaska's schools, increasing from 38 percent in 1999 to 51 percent in 2013. It should be noted that DEED has changed its categories to choose a race over the years, including adding the option of two or more races in 2009 (previously it was labeled "mixed ethnicity"), which may explain some of the change.

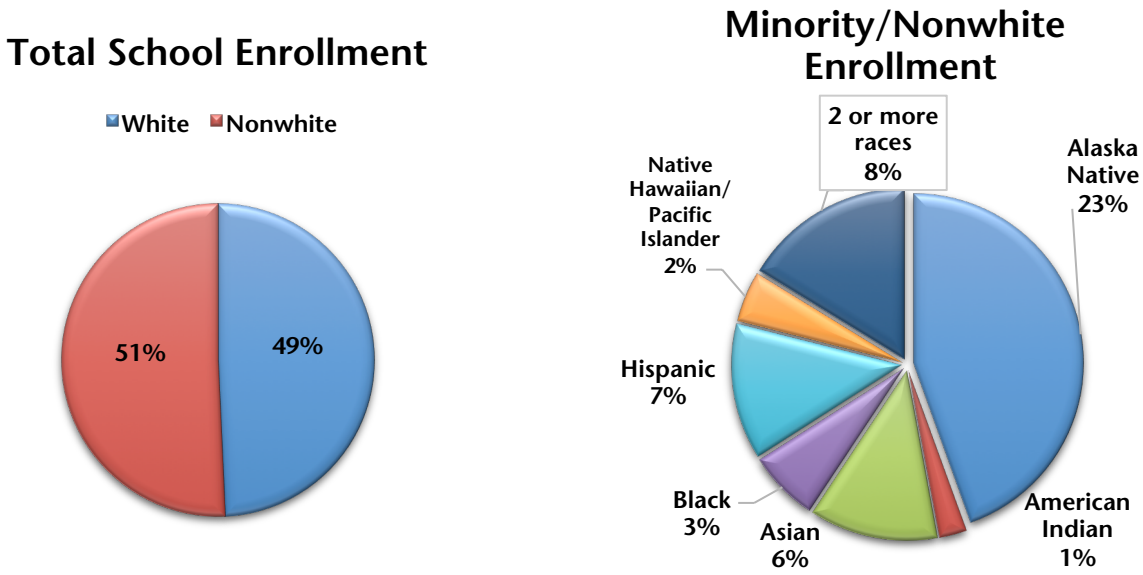
Figure 5. Alaska Public School Enrollment by White and Nonwhite, PK-12, 1999–2013



Source: DEED

Among public school students, Alaska Natives are the most common nonwhite race at 23 percent, followed by Hispanic at 7 percent, Asian at 6 percent, Black at 3 percent, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander at 2 percent, and American Indian at 1 percent. Those claiming two or more races represent 8 percent.

Figure 6. Alaska Public School Enrollment by Race, PK-12, 2013–2014 School Year

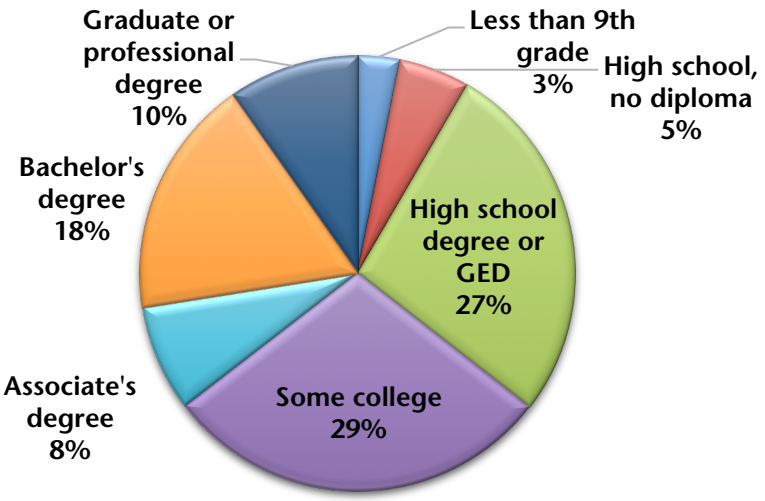


Note: May not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Average

Educational Attainment

Nearly nine out of ten (92 percent) Alaskans age 25 or older possess at least a high school degree. Twenty-nine percent have some college but did not earn a degree; 8 percent achieved an associate's degree; 18 percent achieved a bachelor's degree; and 10 percent achieved a graduate or professional degree.

Figure 7. Alaska Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years and Older, by Percent, 2008-2012 Five-Year Average



Note: May not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Average

For the population 25 years and older the percentage of residents holding a high school degree or GED is similar, 27 and 28 percent respectively, as it the percentage holding a graduate or professional degree (10 and 11 percent respectively. The percentage holding an associate's degree is the same in Alaska as in the U.S. as a whole (both 8 percent) as is the percentage holding a bachelor's degree (both 18 percent).

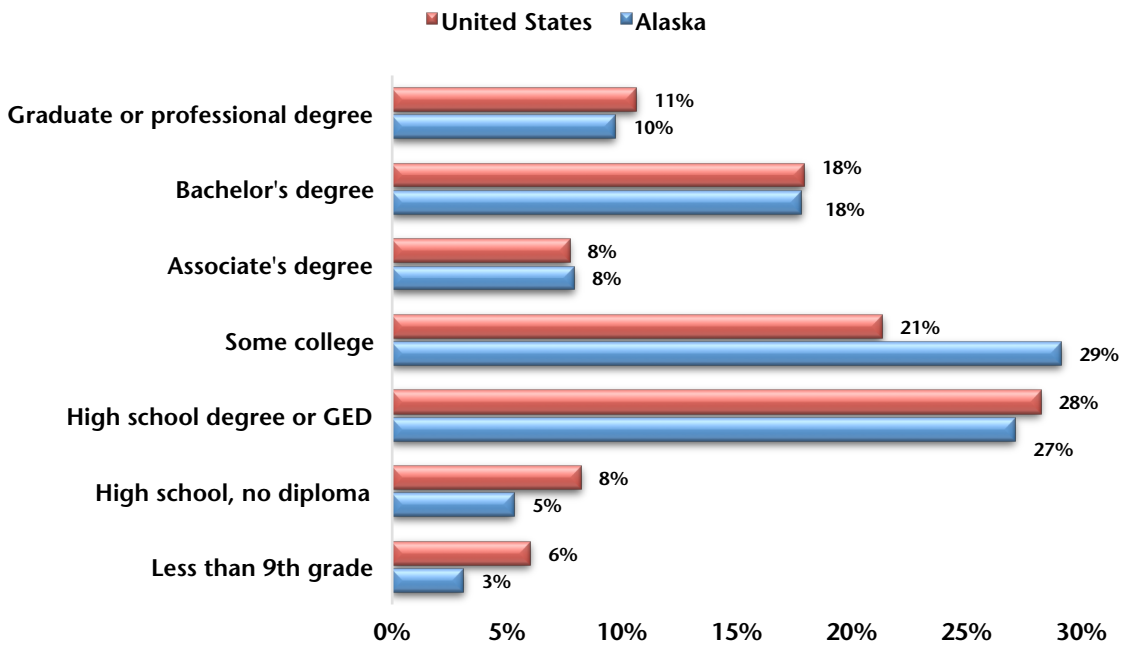
The largest difference between Alaska and the U.S. is in the percentage of residents who have attained "some college": 29 percent, versus 21 percent for the U.S.

Those figures represent educational attainment by Alaska residents, regardless of when they became residents or where they were educated. However, for recent students attending public, four-year postsecondary institutions in Alaska, the actual graduation rate is far below the national average, 27.3 percent compared to 57.4 percent for public universities in the U.S. as a whole.[6]

Note: Detailed information on educational attainment by age for current or recent Alaska students was unavailable. Age data in the annual statistical report of the University of Alaska, UA in Review, is limited to student headcounts (enrolled students) by campus. See "College Enrollment and Completion" on page 23 of this report.

[6] American Institutes for Research. http://www.collegemeasures.org/four-year_colleges/national/scorecard/strategic-measures/

Figure 8. Alaska and United States Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years and Older, by Percent, 2008-2012 Five-Year Average



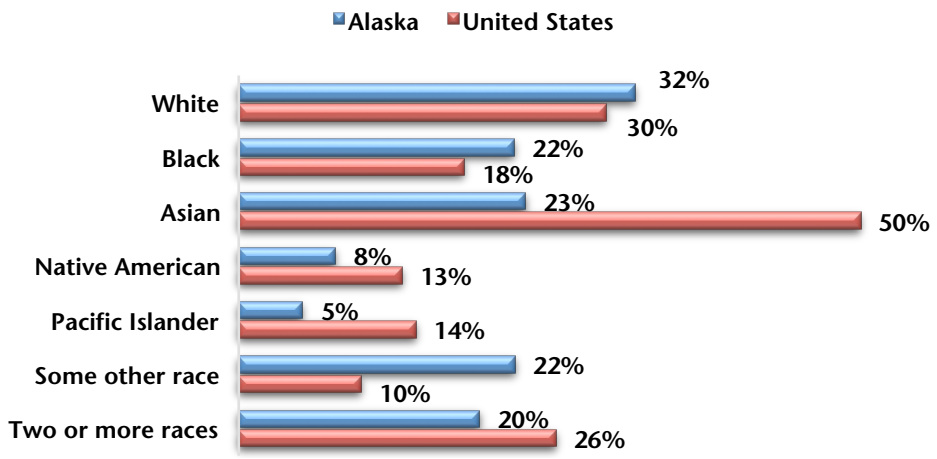
Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Average

Race

Alaska's white population is the most likely to attain at least a Bachelor's degree at 32 percent, followed by Asian at 23 percent, Black and "some other race" at 22 percent, two or more races at 20 percent, Native American at 8 percent, and Pacific Islander at 5 percent.

Compared to the U.S. population, Alaska has a lower percentage of Bachelor's (or higher) attainment than the United States for Asians (23 versus 50 percent), Native Americans (8 versus 13 percent), Pacific Islanders (5 versus 14 percent), and two or more races (20 versus 26 percent). Alaska has a higher percentage of attainment compared to the U.S. for whites (32 versus 30 percent), blacks (22 versus 18 percent), and some other race (22 versus 10 percent).

Figure 9. Alaska and United States Bachelor's Degree or Higher Attainment, Population 25 Years and Older, by Race, by Percent, 2008-2012 Five-Year Average



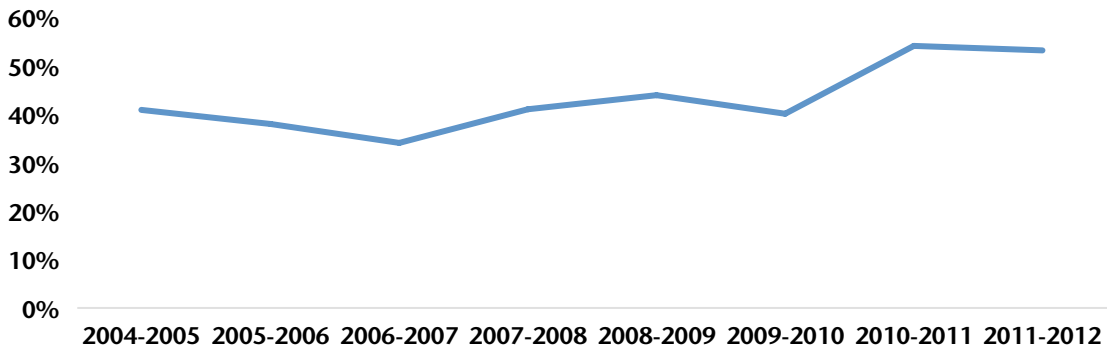
Note: May not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Average

Alaska Secondary Education

School Performance

The following figures show the percentage of schools *not* making the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. The percentage has varied from a low of 34 percent for the 2006-2007 school year to a high of 54 percent for the 2010-11 school year, with the following year showing a slight decline to 53 percent.

Figure 10. Percent of Alaska Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), by School Year, 2004-2012



Source: DEED

Starting with the 2012-13 school year, Alaska no longer uses the AYP reports. The State now uses the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI), where the schools are scored on a 100-point scale, based on growth as well as proficiency in state assessments, attendance, high school graduation, and student performance on work-ready and college entrance exams. The overall ASPI score determines a star-rating category of one through five, with the top performing schools receiving a five-star rating, and the lowest performing schools receiving a one-star rating. For the 2012-13 school year, the most common ratings were four-stars (38 percent) and three-stars (33 percent).

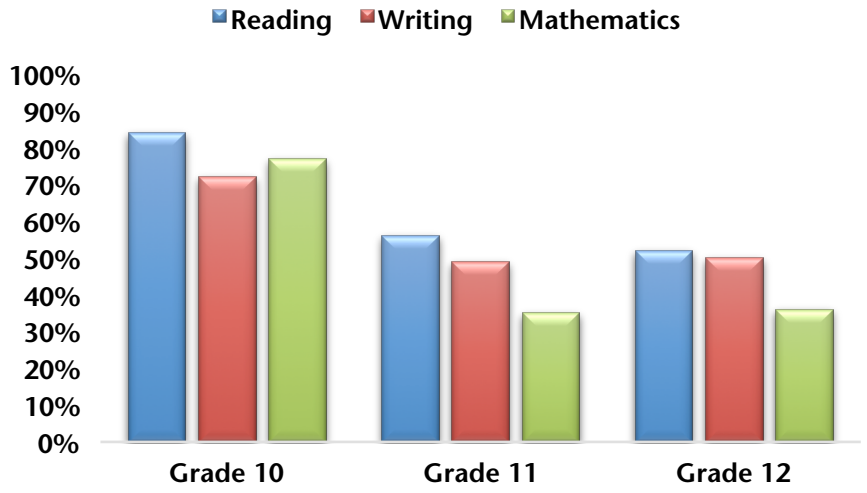
Table 1. Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI) Star Rating, by Count and Percentage, 2012-13 School Year

School Year	Count	Percent
One-star	49	10%
Two-star	48	10
Three-star	164	33
Four-star	189	38
Five-star	53	11

Note: May not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: DEED.

In spring of 2014, the Alaska Legislature voted to repeal the High School Graduate Qualifying Exam (HSGQE). Previously, Alaska required the HSGQE for students enrolled in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades to test their proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics before allowing them to graduate. As the following chart for 2012-13 shows, proficiency in each subject dropped dramatically in grade 11. Reading proficiency rates started at 84 percent in grade 10, then dropped sharply to 56 percent in grade 11. Writing proficiency rates declined from 72 percent in grade 10 to 49 percent in grade 11. Mathematics proficiency showed the largest decline, from 77 percent in grade 10 to 35 percent in grade 11.

Figure 11. Alaska High School Graduate Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) Percent Proficiency in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, Grades 10, 11, 12, 2012-13 School Year



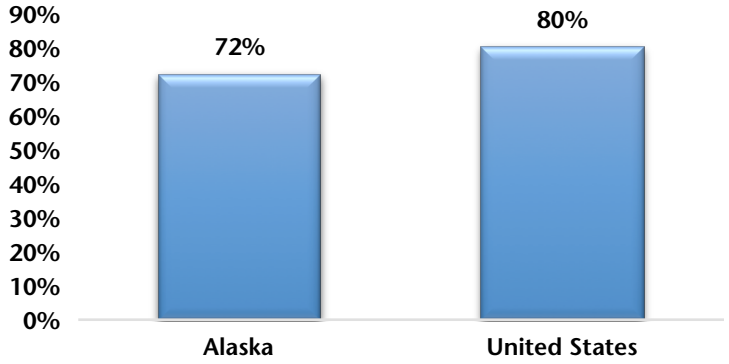
Source: DEED

In place of the HSGQE, Alaska high school students are now required to take one of three exams in order to graduate: the SAT, ACT, or WorkKeys. The State will pay the cost of one sitting for one exam for each student. There is no minimum score on any of the exams required for graduation.

High School Graduation

High school graduation rates below are calculated using the Cumulative Promotion Index. This calculation accounts for the number of students in grades 9 through 11 individually, forming a grade promotion ratio. Until recently, states had been using differing methods to calculate graduation rates, making it difficult to compare graduation rates from state to state, and state to nation. Starting in 2010-11, states were required to calculate rates in a uniform way. Alaska's high school graduation rate for 2013 was 72 percent compared to the U.S. rate of 80 percent.

Figure 12. Alaska and United States High School Graduation Rate, 2013



Source: DEED, *2012 – 2013 Report Card to the Public*

College Enrollment and Completion

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 29,605 individuals were enrolled in undergraduate degree programs in Alaska in the fall of 2010, and 2,801 students were pursuing a graduate degree during that same time period. There were a total of seven Title-IV degree-granting institutions in the state in 2010.

However, Alaska has the lowest number full-time-equivalent students enrolled in public higher education of any state in the nation, including Vermont, North Dakota and Wyoming, all of which have smaller state populations.[7] This is mainly because Alaska has a relatively high proportion of part-time postsecondary students.

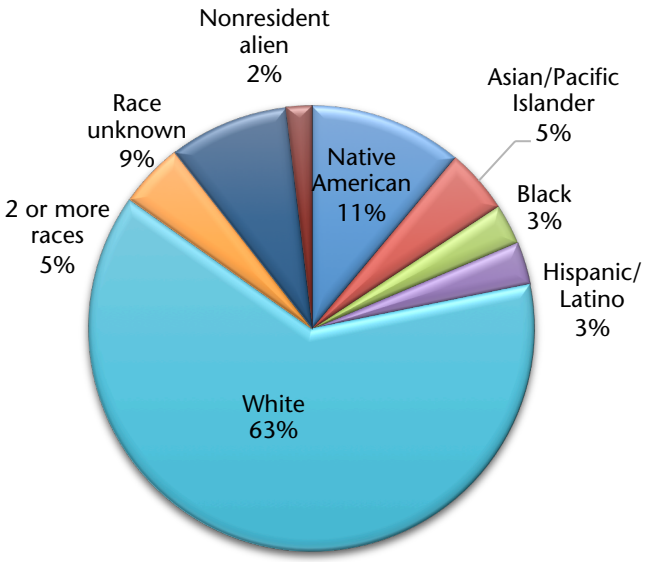
The median age of students enrolled at UA in fall 2013 was 25 (25 at UAA, 26 at UAF, and 29 at UAS).[8] Those figures have been declining. Nearly half the students in the UA system in fall 2013 (48.8 percent) were under 25 years of age, compared to 31 percent in 1990. Nationally, 60 percent of university students were under 25 in fall 2011. Students at rural UA campuses tend to be somewhat older than those in urban areas. For

[7] State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) annual survey, 2013
[8] *UA in Review 2014*

example, the Prince William Sound, Bristol Bay, and Chukchi campuses all had a median student age of 30 or older in fall 2013. Roughly one-fifth (18.8 percent) of all UA students were 40 or older in fall 2013.

Sixty-three percent of 2010 Alaska postsecondary enrollees were white; the next largest component was Native American (including Alaska Native) at 11 percent. Nine percent were "race unknown.

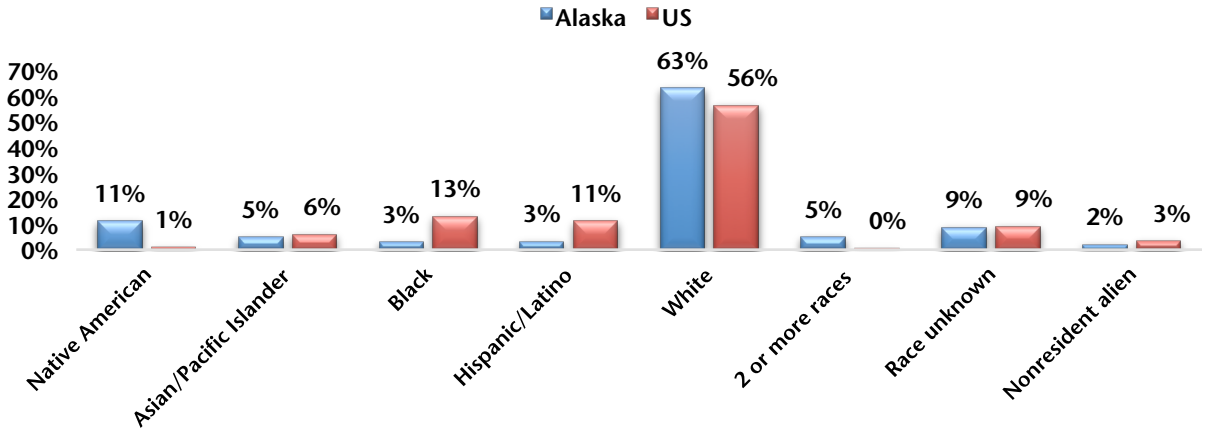
Figure 13. Alaska Enrollment in Postsecondary Education, by Race, Fall 2010



Note: May not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

The main differences between Alaska and the nation as a whole for postsecondary enrollment are a higher percentage of Native Americans (11 versus 1 percent), a lower percentage of Blacks (3 versus 13 percent) and Hispanics/Latinos (3 versus 11 percent), and a higher percentage of whites (63 versus 56 percent).

Figure 14. Alaska and United States Enrollment in Postsecondary Education, by Race, Fall 2010



Note: May not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

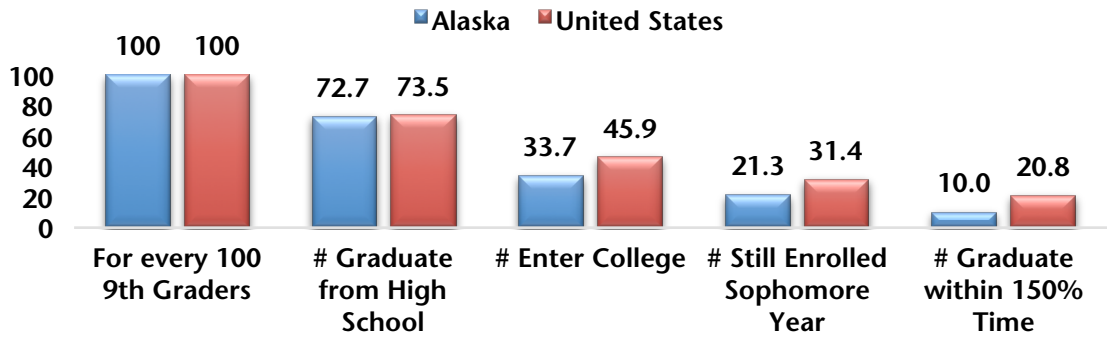
The following table and figure show the "education pipelines" for Alaska and the United States, in terms of what happens to 100 9th graders as they progress through their education. In Alaska, for every 100 9th graders, only 10 will graduate from high school on time, go directly to college, stay enrolled for their sophomore year, and graduate from college within 150 percent of the nominal program time. For the United States as a whole, more than twice as many, 21 percent, will achieve the same outcome.

Table 2. Alaska and United States Grade 9-20 Education Pipeline, 2010

	Alaska	United States
For every 100 ninth graders		
% Graduate from high school on time	73%	74%
% Enter college right after high school graduation	46	63
% Are still enrolled their sophomore year – Two-Year college	24	54
% Are still enrolled their sophomore year – Four-Year college	63	77
% Graduation rate within 3 years – Two-Year college	31	30
% Graduation rate within 6 years – Four-Year college	30	55
% 9th graders who graduate from HS on time, go directly to college, return for their second year, and graduate within 150% of program time	10%	21%

Source: NCHEMS.

Figure 15. Alaska and United States Grade 9-20 Education Pipeline, 2010



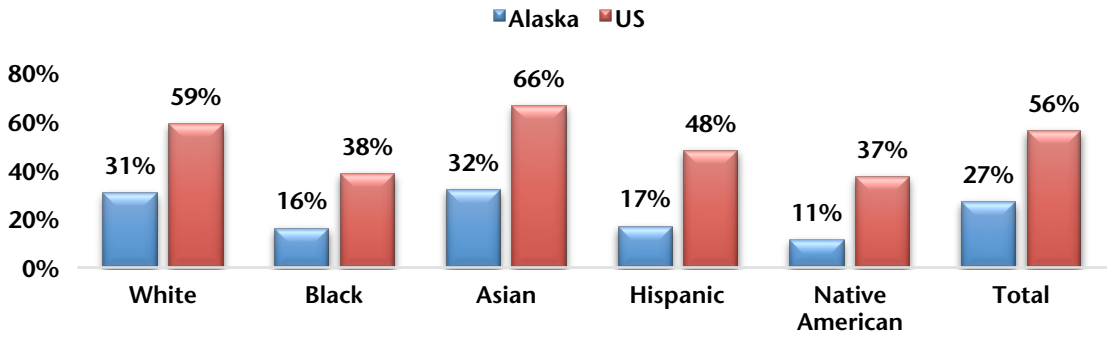
Source: NCHEMS.

College Graduation, by Race

Just over one-quarter (27 percent) of Alaska students at four-year public institutions graduate within six years compared to 56 percent among all U.S. four-year students.

In Alaska, Asian and white students are much more likely to complete a four-year degree within six years (32 and 31 percent, respectively), compared to other races. The completion rate is 17 percent among Hispanics, 16 percent among Blacks, and 11 percent among Native Americans (including Alaska Natives).

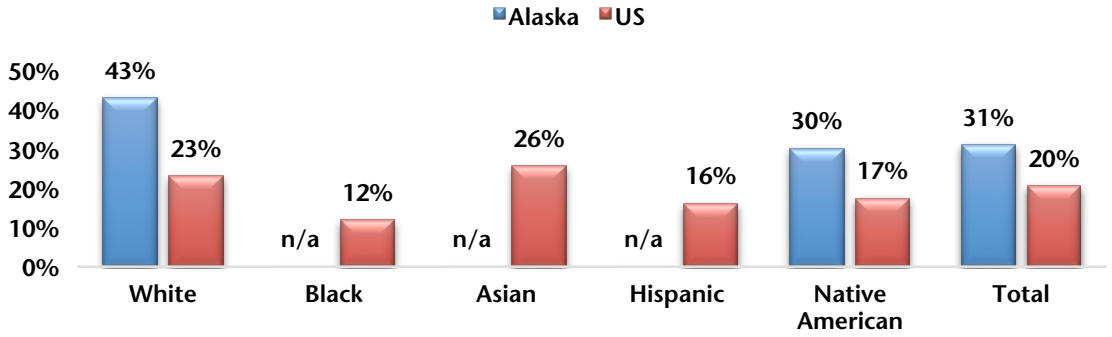
Figure 16. Alaska and United States Percent of Students Graduating in 150 Percent of Time from four-year Public Institutions, by Race, 2010



Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education College Completion

Nearly one-third (31 percent) of Alaskans enrolled at two-year public institutions graduate within three years compared to 20 percent among all U.S. two-year students. Graduation rates for two-year institutions are higher in Alaska than nationally for both whites (43 versus 23 percent) and Native Americans (30 versus 17 percent).

Figure 17. Alaska and United States Percent of Students Graduating in 150 Percent of Time from Two-Year Public Institutions, by Race, 2010

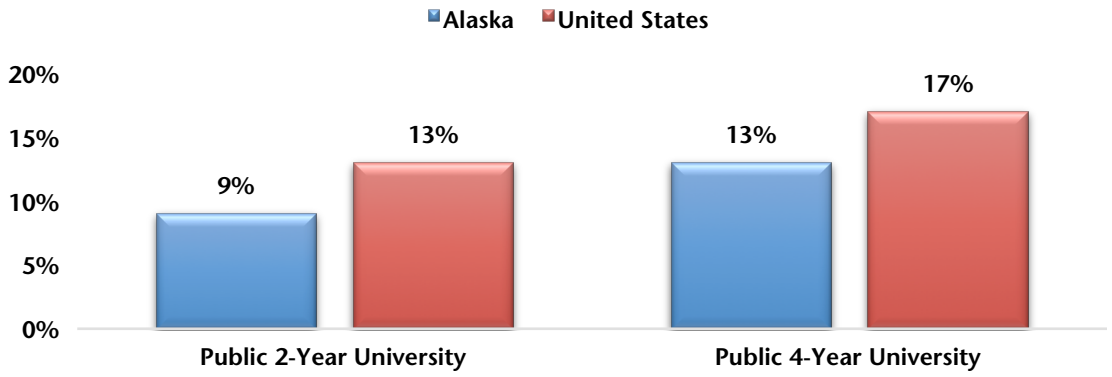


Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education College Completion

College Affordability

Alaska's educational appropriations (state funds) for higher education were more than $12,000 per full-time-equivalent student in 2013, twice the national average and more than in any other state but Wyoming.[9] Partly as a result, as a percentage of median family income, the average cost of attendance of both two-year and four-year public institutions is lower for consumers in Alaska than most other states. In Alaska, the cost of attendance at a two-year public institution represents 9 percent of median family income, compared to 13 percent nationwide. For four-year institutions, the cost in Alaska is 13 percent of median family income, compared to 17 percent nationwide. For four-year institutions, Alaska has the seventh lowest percentage of the entire nation, and for two-year institutions, Alaska has the second lowest percentage, ranking only behind Wyoming.

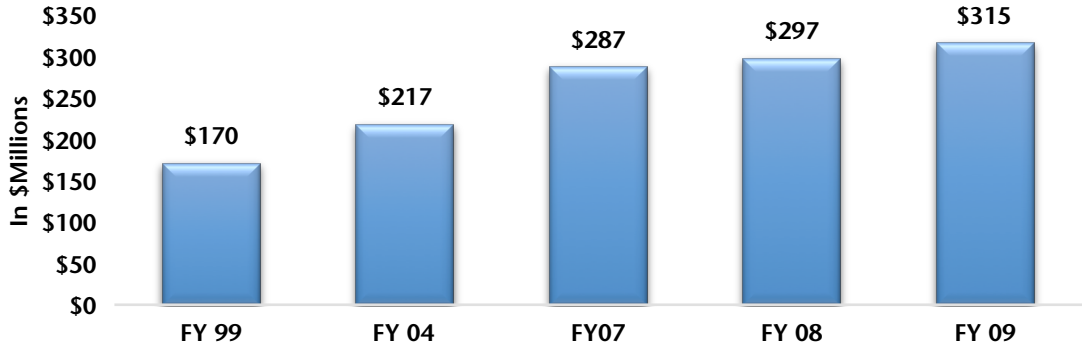
Figure 18. Alaska and United States Average Cost of Attendance as Percent of Median Family Income, 2009



Source: NCHEMS

According to Illinois State University's Grapevine Center for the Study of Education Policy, Alaska's fiscal support for higher education has increased throughout the years, from $170 million for FY1999 to $315 million for FY2009.

Figure 19. Alaska Fiscal Support for Higher Education, in $Millions, Various Fiscal Years



Source: Grapevine Center for the Study of Education Policy.

[9] Ibid

Student Debt

According to data compiled by the Institute for College Access and Success, a lower than average proportion of students in four-year, public, postsecondary programs in Alaska graduate with student debt, 49 percent versus the national average of 61 percent. However, those Alaska students who do graduate with debt owe an average of $28,600 compared with $25,700 nationally.[10]

Based on national federal student loan data, students who enroll in postsecondary programs but do not complete a degree borrow more per credit earned than students who complete a degree ($130 per credit earned for non-completers versus $90 per credit earned for completers at four-year public institutions in 2009).[11]

Vocational and Career Trade Schools

According to DOLWD, there are 132 career/trade/vocational training providers throughout Alaska, offering 1,344 programs. These programs offer many levels of education, from one-day and refresher classes to full, industry-approved certifications. From FY2010 to FY2012, there were 33,009 "exiters" and 24,326 "completers" from these training programs, for an average completion rate of 74 percent. ("Exiters" includes students who leave the program before completing, as well as those who complete. Neither total represents individual students, as it is common for a single student to enroll in more than one program over the course of a year.) A list of Alaska vocational and trade schools recognized by DOLWD is provided in Appendix 1.

Unfortunately additional, current data on vocational and trade school achievement is limited. The AWIB's most recent *Alaska Training Program Performance Report* was released in February 2013 and analyzes data on training program participants who exited programs during FY2011.[12] The report examines the following training programs:

- Adult Basic Education
- Alaska Construction Academy
- Alaska Pipeline Worker Training
- Alaska Technical Center-Kotzebue
- AVTEC
- Delta Career Advancement Center
- Galena Interior Learning Academy
- Ilisagvik College
- Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC)
- New Frontier Vocational Technical Center
- Northern Industrial Training
- Southwest Alaska Vocational and Education Center (SAVEC)
- University of Alaska Vocational Education Programs
- Yuut Elitnaurviat

[10] The Institute for College Access & Success, College InSight, http://www.college-insight.org.
[11] *Stats in Brief*, April 2013, "Federal Student Loan Debt Burden of Noncompleters"
[12] A report for FY2014 is anticipated in early 2015.

In FY2011, these programs had a total of 9,400 exiters, and their median annual wages increased by an average of $3,200 following their program participation.

The AWIB accompanied their report with five recommendations to the governor and legislature. The AWIB's recommendations were as follows:

1. Support the implementation of the state's Career and Technical Education (CTE) plan
   - Provide funding to the DEED/DOL/UA to support the plan
   - Provide funding for schools to develop the infrastructure for the CTE plan: facilities/resources, qualified instructors and career guides/counselors to assure students are oriented to careers and have the opportunity for career activities in the schools and communities.
   - The CTE plan will continue to build partnerships to connect education with business/industry.
2. Support the Alaska Performance Scholarship plan for degree and CTE/training programs
   - This may be a key to entice students into postsecondary training, increase the graduation rate, and better articulate progression from secondary to postsecondary to careers.
   - The scholarship program will raise the standards for students in schools and should help create a more skilled workforce for the future. Few high skill/high wage jobs exist that do not require more math, technology, and communication skills than our graduates have.
3. Expand the "academy" model piloted with the construction trades to include other AWIB priority industries.
   - The academies require close connections between education and business to assure industry standards are met and careers are well communicated.
   - The academies coupled with a Tech-Prep approach have resulted in direct hire of graduates for entry-level and smooth transition into postsecondary training for higher level jobs.
4. Continue to support skill training for occupations vital to Alaska's current and future economy such as mining and other natural resources, renewable energy/energy efficiency, health systems, and infrastructure construction projects as well as emerging sectors.
   - Align capital expenditures for projects with economic development coupled with the workforce development to grow the economy.
5. Continue to support workforce development in all areas of the state.
   - Continue Alaska's Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP) to support Regional Training Centers across the state.
   - Assist regional economic development councils with workforce development to grow local economies.

Workforce Trends

DOLWD projects that total statewide employment will grow by 10.8 percent by 2022.[13] Major-industry categories with the largest projected growth are shown in the table below. The highest-growth areas within those categories are projected to include mining, building construction, wholesale trade, water and truck transportation, professional/scientific/technical services, management, and all health occupations, all with projected growth by 2022 in excess of 15 percent.

Table 3. Industrial Sectors with High Projected Job Growth, 2012 to 2022

	Estimated Jobs in 2012	Estimated Increase by 2022	% Increase by 2022
Healthcare and Social Assistance	44,904	11,247	25.0%
Mining (including Oil and Gas)	19,029	3,374	19.0
Professional and Business Services	29,337	4,558	15.5
Leisure and Hospitality	33,524	3,836	11.4

Source: DOLWD, *Trends*, October 2014.

The role of government employment is expected to diminish somewhat over the next decade, driven by pressure to cut expenditures at both the federal and state levels. DOLWD projects that federal employment will shrink slightly, while state government is expected to grow slowly and local government to remain flat.

NCHEMS has estimated that by 2018, Alaska will face a substantial shortage of qualified workers, including a need for 8,000 more workers with bachelor's degrees and 5,000 more with graduate degrees (Table 5, below). NCHEM's estimates are based on the education levels of workers who currently hold similar jobs as identified by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. DOLWD also publishes estimates of future workforce-education needs, most recently in the October 2014 edition of *Trends*. However, the DOLWD estimates are based on the minimum requirements for each job, rather than the credentials typically needed to perform the position. The NCHEMS estimates are therefore more relevant from the perspective of students considering postsecondary education options.

Table 4. Alaska Education Needs in 2018

Education Level	Alaska Jobs in 2018	Current Workers	Additional Needed
Less than high school	25,000	13,708	11,292
High school graduates	109,000	92,163	16,837
Some college, no degree	100,000	90,910	9,090
Associate's degree	30,000	24,976	5,024
Bachelor's degree	63,000	54,975	8,025
Graduate degree	32,000	36,966	-4,966

Source: NCHEMS Alaska Environmental Scan. Original sources referenced: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, and U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)File

13 *Trends*, October 2014, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Respondent Organizations

This chapter presents results of the online survey of Alaska access and completion program providers. A total of 40 programs responded to the survey; the study team gathered publicly available information on an additional eight programs, for a total of 48 programs represented. These providers represent large institutions, government agencies, and independent organizations of various sizes. Most serve statewide populations, but some focus more narrowly. Most serve all students, but some specialize in specific demographic or other groups.

Programs identified with an asterisk (*) did not respond to the survey. Information about those programs has been included to the extent it could be found in secondary sources.

State of Alaska Programs

- Kids2College
- I Know I Can
- Alaska Education Grant
- Alaska Performance Scholarship
- Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- Alaska College & Career Advising Corps
- Alaska Career Information System - AKCIS
- Community Outreach & Success Center
- Alaska Performance Scholarship
- College Goal Alaska
- Department of Education & Early Development Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program
- Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) – DECA*
- CTSO - Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA)*
- Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education)*

University of Alaska Programs

- Alaska Middle College School
- TRIO Student Support Services UAF
- UAF Upward Bound*
- College & Career Pathways
- Alaska's Learning Network
- Rural Alaska Honors Institute
- Stay on TRACK, University of Alaska

- MAP-Works
- UA Scholars Program
- The University of Alaska Anchorage, Care Team
- College Application Week
- TRIO Educational Talent Search
- Get on Track
- $avvy $eawolf - Financial Literacy @ UAA
- Della Keats Health Sciences Summer Program
- Alaska WWAMI School of Medical Education
- Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP)
- Future Educators of Alaska
- Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaska's Schools (PITAAS)
- Process Technology Degree Program
- Alaska Native Community Advancement in Psychology (ANCAP) Program (UAA)*
- Recruiting and Retention of Alaska Natives into Nursing (RRANN)*
- TRIO - Student Support Services UAA*
- TRIO - Educational Opportunity Center (UAA)*

NATIONAL PROGRAMS

- CTSO SkillsUSA
- Student Conservation Association (SCA)
- Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY)*

SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRAMS

- Career and Technical High School (Mat-Su Borough School District)
- Voyage to Excellence (Chugach School District)
- Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula/Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (partnership)
- Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) (Anchorage School District)

OTHER PROGRAMS

- Ilisagvik College
- Alaska Construction Academies (Alaska General Contractors)
- Alaska Youth Academy (Tanana Chiefs Conference)

Affiliation

Programs were asked whether they are part of a larger organization, and if so, which one. Most of the surveyed programs are associated with, or housed within, either the State of Alaska (27 percent) or the University of Alaska (52 percent).

Table 5. Is your program housed within a larger organization?

	# Programs	%
University of Alaska	25	52%
State of Alaska	13	27
School district	2	4
Other	3	6
None	5	10
Total	**48**	**100%**

Size and Staffing

Thirty-six respondents provided staffing information. The table shows total staffing in each category for those 36 programs.

Table 6. How many staff does your program employ in each of the following categories?

	Total Employed by All Programs
Full-time, year round	175
Part-time, year round	26
Full-time, seasonal	97
Part-time, seasonal	46
Volunteers	595

Budgets and Sources of Funding

Twenty-two programs provided budget information. Of those, 36 percent have annual operations (net of pass-through grants) less than $100,000; 41 percent have budgets between $100,000 and $1 million; and 23 percent have budgets ranging from $1 million to $4.5 million.

When asked to identify the percentage of funding attributable to various sources, the most common sources cited were federal agency (27 percent) and State of Alaska General Fund (27 percent). Other sources include contributions (12 percent) and earned income (3 percent) as well as institutional or partner support (12 percent) from, for example, the Alaska Student Loan Corporation, Alaska University system, or the UA College Savings Plan.

Table 7. What percent of your program's operating funds come from each of the following sources?

	Percent of Total Funding
Federal agency	27%
State of Alaska General Fund	27
Contributions	12
State of Alaska grant	9
Earned Income	3
Other (typically institutional or partner support)	12
Total	**100%**

Respondents were also asked about sources and amounts of grant funding their programs receive and pass along to other programs, but only a few provided that information.

Types of Services

Respondents were asked to identify up to three major types of services they felt best described their program. The most common program type cited was awareness at 54 percent, followed by transition/bridge and financial aid, both at 31 percent.

Eighteen programs specialize in a single type of service. Of those, five are financial aid programs, three are awareness programs, three are completion programs, and three are transition programs. The remainder are distributed among other categories, including two "other."

Table 8. Which of the following best describes your program? (Choose up to three)

	# Programs	%
Awareness program	26	54%
Transition/bridge program	15	31
Financial aid program	15	31
Completion program	12	25
Dual enrollment/exchange program	8	17
Alaska education and workforce data source/educator resource	7	15
National resource for Alaska leadership	4	8
Other	9	19

Respondents who checked "Other" described their programs as follows:

- Behavior Intervention Team to promote individual and university safety and student progress
- College access for under-represented populations
- Conservation and Community leadership
- Develop and provide high school courses statewide through e-learning.
- National Student Leadership

- Partner medical education program with University of Washington School of Medicine
- Student recruitment to increase early applications to UA
- Student recruitment
- Volunteer leadership building

Program Services

Respondents were shown a list of services and asked to identify which ones their program offers. Multiple responses were allowed and, indeed, most programs offer multiple services. The most common services identified were information source (60 percent), scholarships/grants (48 percent), workshops (48 percent), postsecondary exploration (44 percent), and career counseling (42 percent).

Table 9. Which of the following does your program offer? (Check all that apply)

	# Programs	%
Information source	29	60%
Scholarships or grants	23	48
Workshops	23	48
Postsecondary exploration	21	44
Career counseling	20	42
Apprenticeships, job shadowing or career exploration	19	40
Financial counseling	19	40
Student advocacy	18	38
Academic counseling	17	35
Transition support	17	35
Resources or assistance for other access programs	16	33
Academic support or tutoring	15	31
Other kinds of counseling	13	27
Dual enrollment or dual-credit courses	11	23
Other financial assistance	9	19
Public policy	5	10
Other	15	31

"Other" responses included a number of strategies to encourage early awareness and inspiration, such as after-school clubs and academies, personal learning and career plans, leadership development, and volunteer opportunities.

Age of Program

About one-quarter (27 percent) of programs were started in the last ten years, while nearly as many (25 percent) were started in the previous decade, between 1995 and 2004. The remainder of programs were either started before 1995 (18 percent), or information was not available (29 percent).

Table 10. When did your program begin operations?

	# Programs	%
Before 1975	5	10%
1975 - 1984	3	6
1985 - 1994	1	2
1995 - 2004	12	25
2005 or later	13	27
Information not available	14	29
Total	**48**	**100%**

Locations Served

The majority of programs (69 percent) serve both urban and rural areas. Twice as many programs serve exclusively urban areas (21 percent) as serve exclusively rural areas (10 percent).

When asked about areas served, two-thirds of programs said they were statewide; 15 percent mentioned specific districts or schools; 10 percent cited UA campuses; and 8 percent said Anchorage.

Table 11. What region(s) or specific area(s) does your program serve?

	# Programs	%
Urban	10	21%
Rural	5	10
Both	33	69
Total	**48**	**100%**
Specific Areas Served		
Statewide	32	67%
Specific school districts or schools	7	15
Students at one or more University of Alaska campuses	5	10
Anchorage	4	8
Total	**48**	**100%**

Number of Clients

The number of clients served by the programs ranges from fewer than 20, to all students at the University of Alaska (roughly 35,000), to the nearly 90,000 active portfolios for individual users that have been established on AKCIS, the online Alaska Career Information System. About one-third of programs (31 percent) were not able to provide the number of clients served.

Table 12. How many Alaska residents did your program serve in your most recent full year of operation?

	# Programs	%
Less than 100	5	10%
100 – 249	8	17
250 – 999	7	15
1,000 – 10,000	10	21
More than 10,000	3	6
Information not available	15	31
Total	**48**	**100%**

Populations Served

Respondents were shown a list of special populations and asked which, if any, their program targets with specific strategies or initiatives. Nearly half of programs (46 percent) said their program targets all populations. The most common specific groups targeted were first generation going to college and low-income (both at 35 percent), followed by ethnic or cultural groups (33 percent), foster youth (23 percent), students with disabilities (21 percent), and homeless (19 percent). Just six percent of the programs say they have specific strategies for people re-entering the workforce or changing careers.

Table 13. Does your program pursue specific strategies or initiatives for any of these populations? (Check all that apply.)

	# Programs	%
First generation going to college	17	35%
Low-income	17	35
Ethnic or cultural groups	16	33
Foster youth	11	23
Students with disabilities	10	21
Homeless	9	19
Shareholders	5	10
Military personnel	5	10
Gender-specific	4	8
People re-entering the workforce	3	6
People changing careers	3	6
Other	7	15
None; our program targets all populations	22	46

"Other" responses included:

- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) students
- Rural and Alaska Native students in the field of education
- Students in the field of medicine
- Staff and faculty at the University of Alaska

Target Age Groups

The most common age group targeted was high school at 71 percent, followed by those 18 to 24 at 65 percent and those 25 to 35 at 44 percent.

Fifteen of the programs said they target a single age group. Eight target two age groups. The remaining 25 programs target three or more age groups.

Table 14. What age group(s) does your program target? (Check all that apply)

	# Programs	%
K - 5	3	6%
6 - 8	12	25
High school	34	71
18 – 24 years	31	65
25 – 35 years	21	44
36 or older	16	33

Educational Stage of Clients

Nearly three-quarters of the programs (73 percent) target students moving directly from high school into postsecondary education, while 29 percent target those who attended postsecondary but did not complete it, and 25 percent target those who never attended postsecondary.

Table 15. What types of clients does your program target? (Check all that apply)

	# Programs	%
Moving directly from high school into postsecondary	35	73%
Attended postsecondary but did not complete	14	29
Never attended postsecondary	12	25
None of the above	16	33

Note: Respondents who checked "none of the above" typically indicated they serve students in elementary, middle, or high school or a specific population, such as Alaska Native.

Missions and Strategies

Program Missions

Survey respondents were asked to provide or summarize their program's mission. Some missions focus on a particular education level. Others focus on promoting a skillset or on preparing students for a particular type of career. The table shows the number of program missions that fall, approximately, into different areas of focus. Within those broad areas, many program missions suggest more detailed strategies, for example by targeting low-income populations, geographic regions, or specific school districts or university campuses. Seven of the 48 program missions give special emphasis to serving Alaska Native students.

Table 16. Areas of Primary Focus Identified in Mission Statements

	# Programs	%
Educational Level		
All postsecondary education	10	21%
Postsecondary with Alaska Native focus	1	2
College	3	6
Technical education	3	6
Technical education with Alaska Native focus	1	2
Secondary	5	10
Secondary with Alaska Native focus	1	2
Middle school with financial aid focus	1	2
University of Alaska students	5	10
Skill Set		
Career readiness	2	4
Financial aid	2	4
Financial literacy	1	2
Leadership/Life skills	3	6
Career Area		
Business	1	2
Behavioral health with Alaska Native focus	1	2
Construction	1	2
Healthcare	3	6
Healthcare with Alaska Native focus	1	2
Law enforcement/Alaska Native focus	1	2
Teaching with Alaska Native focus	2	4
Total	**48**	**100%**

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Program Partners

Nearly all programs pursue their missions with the help of at least one partner organization. The two most common partners were University of Alaska (77 percent) and school districts (72 percent).

Table 17. Which of the following types of organization do you partner with? (Check all that apply)

	# Programs	%
University of Alaska	30	77%
School district	28	72
Other college or university	15	38
Vocational/technical or career-specific training programs	14	36
Alaska Department of Education and Early Development	14	36
Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development	13	33
ANCSA corporations	11	28
Local or regional non-profits	11	28
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE)	10	26
Other private companies	10	26
Labor unions	6	15
Municipality/Borough	5	13
Chambers of Commerce	5	13
Other	11	28
None	1	3

Program Expansion

Do you feel your program model could be expanded to serve other areas of Alaska?

Of the 38 respondents, 16 said their programs are already statewide; 21 said their programs are suitable for expansion; and just one said expansion does not make sense.

What are the main challenges to expanding your program?

More than half of respondents (20 of 38) said the main challenge to expansion is resources. The next most common set of challenges involve communications, including outreach to students and connecting with small, rural communities, but also lack of bandwidth in parts of rural Alaska. Finally, respondents cited challenges partnering with school districts and other local stakeholders, lack of space and trained personnel, transportation and the cost of arranging campus visits, and lack of data to demonstrate impacts.

Strengths, Challenges and Best Practices

Note: Not all programs provided information for this part of the survey. Typically, the data in this section of the report represents 38 programs.

Program Strengths

Some of the strengths listed by respondents are a function of large size, for example statewide administrative support. Many, however, could apply to a variety of program sizes and strategies. For example, seven respondents described the ability to intervene at a specific point in the student's career as being a program strength. Interestingly, all seven intervention points were different, ranging from second grade to middle school, to high school dual-credit, to the first few weeks of college. In the table below, a single program may have identified more than one strength and therefore be represented on more than one line. In addition, not all programs provided responses.

Table 18. What is your program's biggest strength?

	Number of Mentions
Strategic point of intervention	7
Access to scholarship funds	6
Multidisciplinary/flexible methods for different audiences	6
Partnerships	4
Relationships with students and families	3
Broad outreach	3
Personal learning and career plans	2
Holistic perspective and broad staff expertise	2
Good people	1
Peer mentoring with college graduates	1
Accessibility	1
Credibility	1
Ability to provide high school courses statewide	1
Individual/small-group support	1
Resources for student travel, housing, food	1
Program reputation and alumni base	1
Statewide administrative support	1
Culture of care/early alert system	1
Academic tutoring	1

Program Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify the greatest challenges their programs face. The key overarching challenges were:

- **Building and maintaining partnerships, including collaborations with school districts, the university and State agencies.**
- **Changing people's attitudes about education.**
- **Collecting, managing, and disseminating data and information, including evaluation data.**
- **Funding for program operations and students, and lack of time or staff.**

[NOTE: in this section of the report, and again in the Alaska Stakeholder Interview Summary, following, bulleted examples of responses are italicized when they are in the respondent's own words and not italicized when paraphrased by the study team. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of times a topic was mentioned by different respondents.]

Building and Maintaining Partnerships

- Building awareness of the program, especially among geographically and culturally disparate populations (9)
- *Identifying and building relationships with volunteers*
- *Creating more meaningful partnerships*
- *Coordinating with others providing similar services*
- *Staff turnover at the high schools*
- *More collaboration with school district to integrate postsecondary goals more fully into school culture*
- *Administrators and communities who don't understand the program*
- *The program has not been fully embraced by university staff and faculty at individual campuses*
- *Need to increase faculty participation in using the program as an early alert system*
- *Creating a customer-focused culture within the confines of the state system*
- *Working through bureaucratic processes that delay responsiveness to partner needs*
- *Lack of one comprehensive strategy from all Colleges within the University on how to support and refer students for services*

Changing People's Attitudes about Education

- *Lack of college-going culture*
- *Attracting students to the challenging career of teaching*
- *Engaging 8th graders on their terms*
- *Recruiting motivated youth*
- *Getting students to attend/participate*
- *Educating students and parents about the processes and procedures of college*

- *Need to increase student participation*
- *Teaching students to deal with the freedom they experience when they transition from high school to our program*

HANDLING DATA AND MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

- Using databases. (3)
- *Getting the correct information out to applicants.*
- *Raise level of Administration Tools usage by staff/faculty members.*
- *The complex process of receiving student information. When the process breaks down we are forced to refer the student to another entity instead of having the ability to resole the issue for the student.*
- *Making sure students have the information they need early in high school to ensure they pursue the rigorous curriculum needed to receive a scholarship.*
- *Outcome data is less decisive than that available for higher-touch programs such as student mentoring or advising services. Although feedback from service recipients is overwhelmingly positive, we lack concrete data to demonstrate whether or not this program results in new individuals attending and completing postsecondary education.*
- *Changing public policy around outcomes measurement.*

FUNDING FOR PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND STUDENTS

- Funding, including federal sequestration and budget cuts (8)
- Uncertain federal funding/soft grants (7)
- *Long-term funding for operations and expansion.*
- *Funding, including potential cuts to partner programs such as WWAMI*
- *Recruiting faculty to a university system under threat of major cuts*
- *Funds for training, growth, and leadership development*
- *Giving rural communities the resources and training they need to have a great event*
- *Limited resources allow us to only offer the program to some (not all) schools*

Lack of Time or Staff

- Lack of staff (2)
- *Time to develop and create stronger programs and increased growth statewide*
- *Not having enough time in the summer and trying to find ways to grow the program*
- *Huge workload on a short time-frame. Processing and inputting application details, prepping shipments, volunteer recruitment, statewide coordination, and multiple trainings all at once*
- *Staff time for fundraising*

Funding for Students

- *Lack of access by students to affordable student loans*
- *Helping low-income students find aid to meet their financial obligations*

- *Space to house students during visits to our school*
- *Funding for (high school) student travel so they can learn about college*
- *Cost of competitions for students*

Program Technical and Training Needs

The survey included several questions about what access and completions programs need in order to be more effective. The most common need of individual programs is skills and resources for marketing and outreach.

Marketing and Related Technical Skills

Thirteen programs mentioned either marketing or social media needs, including the following:

- Education and marketing to students about the program, including use of social media
- Advertising and public service announcements
- Statewide PR for postsecondary access issues
- Developing and implementing effective targeting, outreach and messaging strategies for students of non-traditional ages, minority students, and low-income students

Several programs said they need related skills, including database management (3), grantwriting (2), advocacy (2), fundraising, and volunteer outreach and coordination.

Other Training

- Cultural/diversity training (3)
- Delivering challenging information to customers (2)
- Training for counselors, teachers, advisors (3)
- Leadership training, personal development training, management training (2)
- *Faculty development in active learning; cross cultural training*
- *Crisis Intervention Training through APD*
- *How to implement a Personal Learning Career Plan*
- *Advising and supporting students transitioning from high school to college*
- *Advising case management*
- *Ongoing threat assessment training from the FBI, ATAP, and College Behavioral Intervention Groups*
- *Certified BPA (Business and Professional Association) advisor*
- *AKCIS training*

Needs of the Field as a Whole

Suggestions to help Alaska's access and completion programs coalesce into a more effective and well-defined field of practice included the following:

- **Better access to curriculum and information about best practices**
- **Better coordination between postsecondary institutions, access and completion programs, and school districts**
- **An information clearinghouse**
- **Networking and conferencing opportunities**
- **More and better data of various types**

Access to Curriculum and Information about Best Practices

- A more systematic approach for the field (2)
- *A comprehensive career and college planning and preparation curriculum, ideally self-paced*
- *Cohesive postsecondary access and enrollment process curriculum*
- *Additional training in online course development and instructional strategies*
- *Best practices in postsecondary access, working with rural youth, better understanding college match and fit as related to Alaskan students*
- *Offering online applications, developing on-line curricula, teaching on-line learners, connecting with students in an asynchronous environment*
- *Having access to national data and gain an understanding what the stats represent*

Better Coordination between Postsecondary Institutions, Access and Completion Programs, and School Districts

- *Any opportunity to interact with school administrators to better explain the program*
- *Engaging with other key stakeholders – parents, counselors, school district personnel*
- *Greater partnerships and communication with school districts*
- *Workshops focusing on relationship/partnership/collaboration between secondary and postsecondary entities*
- *More opportunities to talk with educators and counselors throughout the state – particularly for rural Alaska where coordinators are limited or unfamiliar with the program*
- *More continuity among school districts with how they grade/rank students*

An Information Clearinghouse

- *A clearinghouse of sorts to provide: 1) Better advance information on what education- or student-related events will be taking place when, and 2) A method for service requests from partners to be coordinated with other programs providing similar services*
- *Gathered list of resources throughout the state. This would be used to increase partnerships and tie resources together – homeless shelter, employment services, AKCIS, school options*
- *Student clearinghouse for workshops, presentations*

Networking and Conferencing Opportunities

- *Indigenous educator conferences*
- *Financial Literacy conferences, other brainstorming arenas with outside schools*
- *Sharing of ideas and knowledge between coordinators*
- *Collegial working discussions with other professionals who have similar scope and influence, including national conferences*
- *Cohesive support networks where programs know about each other and are united in their efforts will benefit us all*
- *Face to face meetings of the Network*
- *Academic engagement. Joining Complete College America*

Data Needs

Respondents said the types of information and data below would be useful.

Comprehensive Data

- *Comprehensive data of the type developed by the states working with Complete College America to fully grasp the issue, then presented in layman's terms so everyone can identify with it*
- *Updates on all new financial aid laws and challenges*

Population Data

- *Better information regarding the Anchorage adult population's rates of college completion, especially for low-income neighborhoods*
- *Internet strengths and weaknesses in rural Alaska. Schools without computer access to students*
- *Statewide data on Alaska Native student degree completion and current employment data*
- *Student enrollment in postsecondary programs not reported to National Student Clearinghouse (CTE, proprietary, etc.)*

Data about Other Programs

- *Programs around the state that are doing similar work*
- *States with large CTSO/FCCLA programs and what makes their programs strong*

Assessment Data

(See the "Measurement and Evaluation," section following.)

Other Needs of the Field

- *Increased opportunities for rural college students who are pursuing education degrees to mentor rural high school students interested in education careers*
- *More support from the Department of Education*
- *More participation from other IHEs in the general CAW movement*
- *How to make a video; how to host virtual events*

Measurement and Evaluation

Definitions of Success

Respondents listed many different definitions of success, some as general as improved academic performance and some as specific as "completion of Algebra I by grade 8." The table below does not include every specific definition, but provides a summary of the types of success described by respondents and the number of programs that included that type somewhere in their definition of success. Not surprisingly, the definitions mentioned most often are attainment of a postsecondary degree, enrollment in a postsecondary program, and continuing attendance in a postsecondary program. However, many programs use measures not directly connected to postsecondary attendance.

Forty programs provided definitions of success. Programs that use more than one definition are represented in more than one line in the table.

Table 19. Program Definitions of Success

	# Programs Using
Attainment of a postsecondary certificate or degree	15
Enrollment in a postsecondary program	9
Ongoing postsecondary attendance/successful academic performance	6
Application (or intention to apply) for postsecondary education	6
Completion of particular discussions/activities/workshops/career explorations	5
Employment or career advancement	5
Readiness for college/high school academic success	5
Graduation from high school	3
Student acquisition of new information and resources	3
Completion of college courses during high school	3
Demonstration of student initiative or leadership roles	3
Application or qualification for a scholarship	3
Identification of career interests and pathways, an educational or career plan	2
Academic outcomes in high school	2
Development of "soft skills" for college	2
Completion of specific types of postsecondary courses	1
Increase in full-credit load of postsecondary students	1
Improved (postsecondary) institutional culture and climate	1
Postsecondary graduates working in Alaska	1
Performance on tests determined by the program	1

Respondents were asked to report or estimate what percentage of their clients met the program's own definition of success. Approximately half the respondents (21) provided this information. Success rates ranged from 100 percent (six programs) to 55 percent, with an average of 85 percent. Since the definitions

of success vary considerably, the success rate, alone, should not be considered a reflection of program effectiveness.

Sources of Data

Respondents gather evaluation data in a variety of ways ranging from parent surveys and participant interviews to university transcripts and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) data. Table 20 shows sources of data identified for program evaluation. Internal program completion statistics (70 percent of programs), participant surveys (63 percent), and University of Alaska records (50 percent) are the most common.

Table 20. How do you obtain data to measure your program's effectiveness?

	# Programs	%
Internal program completion statistics	28	72%
Participant surveys	25	64
University of Alaska records	20	51
Internal student placement statistics	13	33
National Student Clearinghouse data	11	28
Client/student interviews	10	26
Other postsecondary institution records	9	23
Parent surveys	8	21
Teachers & Educators survey or interviews	4	10
State of Alaska EED and/or DOL data	3	8
Google Analytics	2	5
University of Alaska staff administration survey	2	5
Statewide/District coordinators survey	2	5
Middle school and high school transcripts	1	3

Note: Not all programs provided data sources for program evaluation. Those that provided more than one definition are represented on more than one line of the table.

Performance Indicators

Performance indicators are clearly defined markers used to help show whether or not a program is making progress toward its goals. Ideally, indicators are relatively simple to understand, based on timely data, and have an understandable connection to the overall goals. Of the forty respondents who identified specific goals, only one did not provide a performance indicator of some kind. The survey included a list of common indicators for participants to choose from, along with the option to list additional indicators. Participant satisfaction and graduation were the two most commonly used indicators, followed by postsecondary academic performance and application to a postsecondary program.

Table 21. What performance indicators do you use to track your program's effectiveness?

	# Programs	%
Participant satisfaction	21	54%
Participant graduations/certifications	20	51
Participant postsecondary performance (grades, test scores)	14	36
Participant applications to postsecondary programs	13	33
Participant employment outcomes	11	28
Parent satisfaction	10	26
Partner institution satisfaction	10	26

Additional indicators include:

- Volunteer satisfaction
- Middle and high school transcripts
- AKCIS usage
- Participant confidence
- FAFSA filing
- Risk rating
- Postsecondary retention rates
- Intent to pursue college and/or career training

OUTCOME DATA

Nearly all programs want better outcome data. This could be qualitative data (interviews, stories, anecdotes) that can provide important insights into, for examples, students' priorities and motivations, or more quantifiable data such as college and employment outcomes, including the first job following completion of a postsecondary program but also subsequent employment data.

The most challenging data to obtain, but often the most needed, is longitudinal tracking of students in order to assess the long-term impacts of program interventions. This is a function no single program can provide as it requires aggregating information from different sources over time. The State of Alaska has been engaged in several large data projects that, once complete, will help address this need (see the "Recommendations" section at the end of this report for more detail.)

Specific data needs include:

- *College completion rates, enrollment, etc.*
- *Common definitions, metrics, and operational definitions around these broad program outcomes are needed in the state in order to do any comparative metrics.*
- *We don't have any mechanisms for tracking student workforce participation after they graduate. Our legislators have asked us for this in the past and the mechanisms just don't exist for this type of tracking.*

- *Qualitative data on successful approaches and strategies for supporting Alaska Native students to complete degrees and certificates in the field of education.*
- *Tracking the post-college success of our students is challenging. Anything that assisted with this process would be helpful.*
- *The ability to track students who participate in (our program) through the years to gauge their successful completion of college and to ask what impact they think the program had on them.*

Successes

Respondents were asked to provide specific examples that demonstrate success. As with the performance indicators, these stories address a wide variety of experiences. It is apparent that some programs develop strong relationships with participants, whereas others play the more institutional role of a reliable resource. Thirty-one respondents described success stories. A dozen programs reported statistics ranging from program enrollment to the percentage of participants who obtained bachelor's degrees. Nine respondents told of personal post-program accomplishments ranging from parents discussing career goals to participants successfully pursuing specific careers. Others commented on program growth, seeing program graduates go on to post-graduate studies, and seeing participants display improved confidence and life-skills. Following is a selection of statistics and personal accomplishments reported in the success stories.

Success by the Numbers

- 85 out of 89 (96 percent) of Della Keats participants continued on to college.
- WWAMI produced 500 physicians; more than half returned to Alaska to practice.
- 77 percent of ANSEP middle school students complete Algebra 1 before graduating from 8th grade compared to 26 percent nationally.
- Since 2003: 4,385 UA Scholarships, 1,507 degree recipients, 1,194 baccalaureate degrees, 373 associate's degrees and over 50 certificates.
- Educational Talent Search served 767 middle and high school students; 527 earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher for at least one quarter.
- From the Fall 2013 MAP-Works First Year Cohort, 1,232 out of 1,609 (77 percent) persisted into Spring 2014 with an average GPA of 2.23.
- 87 percent of families who responded to [I Know I Can Parent Survey] completed recommended activities with their child.

Success by Personal Accomplishment

- "Enjoyed discussing the book with my child and plan to discuss his career dreams and education regularly."
- A CGA scholarship recipient was a young woman from a background traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. She is preparing to become the first in her family to go to college, attending UAA.
- A recent graduate received numerous scholarships including a Fund the Future scholarship to Mat-Su College. She was recruited by Holland America to work, participated in two National ProStart culinary arts competitions and one National FCCLA conference. She has raised the bar for education for her peers and seven siblings.

- An Alaska Native youth from Fairbanks who was disconnected from her indigenous roots successfully completed a 30-day summer conservation crew, attended her first year at UAA and come back to SCA as an individually placed intern serving for four months in Lake Clark National Park.
- "Dear Project GRAD ... This December I will be graduating with a Bachelors in Nursing Science and will be a RN as soon as I pass my state licensing exam afterward. I remember my time at Project GRAD fondly and know I would not be where I am today without the lessons I learned at Project GRAD and my parents' support to achieve an education I am proud of. Thank you Project GRAD."
- "Suicide threats are being responded to before completion; threats to student safety are being addressed. We have two students who have gone from weekly suicide threats to stable behavior with no threats or attempts in six to nine months."

Alaska Stakeholder Interview Summary

Executive Interview Process

Twenty-six interviews were conducted with individuals who are knowledgeable about Alaska postsecondary access and completion. Interviewees represented a range of perspectives, including professionals in secondary education and postsecondary education, non-profit and community organizations, government agencies, and workforce development programs.

Interviewees were asked for their opinions and ideas on a variety of access and completion issues. The results provide a rich picture of the status of access and completion programs in Alaska. Topics addressed in the interviews include challenges and gaps in services, strategies and best practices, communications and collaboration, support and funding, and messaging and outreach. Interviewees also discussed public policies and norms that impact access and completion.

[NOTE: in this section of the report, as in the "Program Survey Results" above, bulleted examples of responses are italicized when they are in the respondent's own words.]

Challenges and Gaps in Services

Broad Challenges for the Access and Completion Field in Alaska

The broad challenges are all part of a consistent theme in survey results and interviews, namely that Alaska lacks a culture wherein the value of higher education is widely recognized and accepted. Stakeholders said it is difficult to make many Alaska youths understand why postsecondary education is important for them. Students weigh the cost and time associated with postsecondary education against the relatively large number of high paying jobs that are available to new high school graduates in Alaska and question why they should make the investment.

Within the challenge of "cultural shift," stakeholders focused on the following three main areas:

- **Conveying the value of postsecondary education**
- **Creating awareness of postsecondary options and opportunities**
- **Providing comprehensive services, including reducing student anxiety about transitioning from rural to urban environments**

A more detailed analysis of the challenge of building a postsecondary culture in Alaska may be found below in the section "Public Policies that Affect Access and Completion."

> *We have the highest proportion of part-time students in the nation. And part-time students complete at a rate of 8%. We have a lot of policies that encourage part-time attendance. We cater to post-traditional student who's older, has a family, doing it on the side. We are setting all these students up for failure. We're letting them take on debt. The odds are so low for completion. That's not communicated.*

Conveying the Value of Postsecondary Education

Have a state that has a lot of opportunities for kids to not get a degree (on-the-job training), can get paid more on the side of the road as a flagger, work on the North Slope.

It's a hard decision between working and earning money or postponing the money and pursuing an education.

We need to change the culture to recognize difference between job and career, be it collegiate or vocational.

It is very important to provide services for students that are interested in something other than college for postsecondary education.

Depending on their background, it can be difficult for some students to even think in terms of going to college, including the idea that they could do it, that there's value in it, and what it could bring them.

The challenge is creating a path that is relevant to students, that motivates them.

Creating Awareness of Postsecondary Options and Opportunities

Early education and early career awareness are fundamental to future success of access and completion programs.

For both urban and rural Alaska, awareness is an issue. If previous generations haven't engaged in postsecondary education, they often rely on schools for awareness.

People feel like they need to leave the state to get the education they want, not knowing it's right here in Alaska for them. This is a misperception. We need to change the perception of what we have to offer in the state so people don't feel they have to leave – especially for those who don't want to leave their community.

Providing Comprehensive Services

One of the most difficult issues for employers right now is "soft skills." The basics: employees who show up to work on time, clean and drug-free, with a work ethic. Who is responsible for that? Schools, families, etc.? Is there a role for postsecondary in that?

There are many reasons for underperforming. In many cases it's not that they can't do the work.

In rural Alaska, it is the transition from a very familiar environment to a non-familiar one.

Program Gaps

Access and completion programs don't reach every Alaska population that needs them, according to interviewees. In particular they pointed to lower income individuals and rural residents and noted that, in part, this reflects student and parent awareness of the programs.

Based on the survey of Alaska access and completion programs, older students returning to school also are underserved, however those interviewed did not say there is a gap with respect to that population. They did point to inconsistent internet service as a limitation both for delivering access and completion services and for students trying to access postsecondary education providers.

> *High non-completion rates are an issue. Students need support from when they walk in the door through graduation. The worst thing we can do is get someone in with a student loan, then they walk out without a degree, increased debt, and no increased earning potential.*

Types of Students

We have a lot of need in rural Alaska, and even in urban centers we have pockets of kids with risk backgrounds.

There could be more done to target the younger population through online exposure.

Rural, low and middle income, and Alaska Native are underserved.

Geographic Availability

Many programs are only available in a specific district and could be expanded, especially in rural Alaska.

The gaps are typically rural schools (many don't have counselors) and low income schools (they have less money, but also less time and ability to advocate for their students).

The opportunities to attend are there, but dual-credit classes can be very difficult to find. And we can have all these programs, but if rural school districts are not properly preparing students, we are not going to see improvement.

Continuity of Services

If they don't have right supports in place, it's easy to opt out and not complete the entire process. In order to reach participants all along the way, it is important to help people make informed decisions.

There are too many people who need services and not enough people who can provide service. Often one person serves a very large region, it's too much for one person.

Technical Issues

Bandwidth and coordinating financial and information resources are all challenges.

A better way to collect data is needed in order to have an accurate picture of what's happening.

*A list (*of access and completion resources*) like the one ACPE has created that is comprehensive and updated that provides information in one place is very helpful. The list will be crucial to share, make it widely available for leaders and consumers.*

Strategies and Best Practices

Among those interviewed, several strategies received multiple endorsements:

- **Provide hands-on services that address students holistically.**
- **Focus on postsecondary preparation.**
- **Support or expand the Alaska Performance Scholarship.**
- **Start awareness and intervention efforts early.**
- **Be rigorous about data.**

Within those broad strategies, individuals differed somewhat on specifics, as shown in the sample comments below.

Provide Hands-On Services that Address Students Holistically

Interact directly with the students (rather than simply providing information).

A lot of hands-on support for students is key.

> *High touch/face-to-face is a key component. Someone there to guide students along every step of the way. It's expensive, but it works.*

Look at holistic programs like Upward Bound and Rural Student Services that provide comprehensive services (financial support, advising, the whole situation for the student).

Make sure that students are helped through their transition, meet them where they are in life (high school grad, family person going back to school, etc.).

Provide comprehensive services that support the student in all aspects of access and completion, from financial aid, to counseling, and support networks for life outside of education as well.

Assign a comprehensive coordinator for access and completion programs.

Some other states have a portal that involves different agencies for a one-stop shop for students. These programs coordinate everyone together, buying in and making a plan.

Use technology or whatever else is available to reach individuals (young and old) where they're at.

Streamline systems to make programs more accessible to students.

> *Programs that are mindful of the history, culture, and values of the students and actually incorporate those components into the program framework. Students have to see programs that are relevant to their own experiences. It is critical that they feel like they belong.*

FOCUS ON POSTSECONDARY PREPARATION

Make career education and technical education widely available at the secondary level to keep students engaged in school and help them identify career paths.

Increase opportunities for dual enrollment.

Dual-credit classes are very important.

Encourage students to take developmental classes in secondary school.

Addressing skill gaps would help so when students enter college they don't have to take a lot of remedial courses in order to become ready for 100 level courses. That discourages a lot of students.

Specific goals adopted with the local school district, for example, "students will successfully complete a college class or score 4/5 on AP tests, or graduate with some industry certification."

SUPPORT OR EXPAND THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP

Having scholarship funds attached, for example APS is a big incentive.

Provide curriculum that makes more students eligible for the APS.

Improve the APS: The scholarship cannot be awarded until enrollment is confirmed for Fall semester in September. This confirmation occurs way after students hear about financial aid from other schools outside of Alaska, thus competitive awards need to be put out in late March/early April.

START AWARENESS AND INTERVENTION EFFORTS EARLY

Emphasize early development, rather than starting at the secondary level.

College- and career-ready activities in elementary and middle school, so they can focus on skills and careers in high school.

BE RIGOROUS ABOUT DATA MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION

Track data to measure success and make adjustments in services as necessary.

Evidence-based student outcomes and acting on those results, that's what makes these programs successful. Using that as a feedback mechanism to continually refine the programs.

To be more effective, we need to measure better, for example with longitudinal data on student transitions from schools to postsecondary to work.

OTHER USEFUL PROGRAM MODELS MENTIONED

Workplace exploration – *Get kids out of the school building, take them to places where they can see industry in action and visit colleges. Maintain ongoing and active engagement with employers.*

Cohort models – *Build a network of students with shared background and experiences, especially rural and Alaska Native.*

Mentoring – *Ask adults from the region where students come from and who live in places where academic and training programs are offered to volunteer as mentors.*

Summer programs – *Summer is a huge opportunity to reach students with accelerated programs, especially between 9th and 10th grades. Summer transition-type programs, especially for students from small communities.*

School districts – *Create models and best practices from successful Alaska school districts, such as those who are preparing APS students well.*

OTHER EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

> *Honest and thorough (student) assessments. RAHI does a good job of that. They know who they accept, their characteristics, they know who completes, they use that to determine who they accept. Then they provide support.*
>
> *The best programs have relevance. They tie in with things that are specific to Alaska, to Alaska's career and workforce needs.*
>
> *More parental involvement helps.*

Communication and Collaboration

A fundamental impetus behind the Network has been to foster effective communication and collaboration throughout the field of access and completion in Alaska. The interviews therefore addressed existing collaborations, communications challenges, and ideas to improve collaboration and communication.

Types of Collaboration

Interviewees were asked what examples of access and completion collaboration they are aware of, other than the Network. They described the following types:

- Within the University of Alaska system
- Within a region
- With and among State of Alaska entities, e.g., ACPE and UA
- With related programs out of state, e.g., American College Testing (ACT) and College Board
- Among broader, umbrella organizations, for example membership organizations or groups that have a stake in access and completion but do other work as well, for example the Alaska Native Professional Association, the Native Education Foundation, and the Alaska School Counselors Association

Examples of Collaboration

Interviewees said the following were examples of effective collaboration:

A joint state Board of Education/UA Board of Regents committee has been formed to look at transition and dual enrollment in particular.

UA and ACPE have engaged in quarterly college access/success meetings for over a year.

An annual APS interagency communications meeting includes attendance from the governor's office, ACPE, DEED, and UA.

DOLWD is putting together a website that is for institutions, but eventually for students, to provide a full inventory of all programs and services available to institutions so that they can assist populations of interest in Alaska, including with financial aid.

Some Alaska Native Education Associations act as networks for access and completion. They cover primary and secondary. They gather at the Bilingual and Multicultural Ed Conference in Fairbanks.

Talk Story/Write Story resulted in three Alaska seniors getting the Gates Millennium Scholarships which are full ride with support through PhD.

Many school districts are gearing up to run CTE programs.

Education consortiums are being developed to better prepare students for college, combat dropout rates, and help schools equip students to graduate.

Communication Challenges

Lack of common definitions and other terminology and lack of formalized communications channels were among the challenges identified.

There is not a set of common terms and terminology that bridges the education perspective and the employer perspective. As a result, the perspectives often don't align.

What is meant by "workforce ready?" and is that definition shared by employers?

A lot of communication depends on individuals with particular relationships. If people move from a position, the connection can be lost.

We need to do a better job of letting everyone know these programs exist.

Improving Communications and Collaboration

Ideas for improved communication and information sharing included:

- **Broaden the scope of communications.**
- **Align terminology across programs and sectors.**
- **Organize communications channels.**

Broaden the Scope of Communications

Team with entities that have similar focuses but whose scope is wider than access and completion, such as the professional associations.

Broaden the circle of communication statewide, especially to include rural communities.

Reach out to key individuals in the rural communities.

Develop a clearinghouse of opportunities to collaborate.

Invite rural/Alaska Native programs to present to the Network (for example on the day before a meeting).

Align Terminology across Programs and Sectors

Align terminology, especially between the educator and employee perspectives, and ask employers what they expect.

Change the culture around college to make it more of a priority statewide.

Organize Communications Channels

Need an annual conference or event about postsecondary access/completion so there's a designated contact at each agency.

Use outreach listservs within the university for guidance counselors, state associations, teachers, counselors, and potentially employers as well.

The challenge is to get people together in an organized fashion with clear objectives. The Network is still evolving.

Support and Funding

Major programs such as APS and ANSEP are perceived as reasonably well funded, but most programs must work with variable funding over time. Programs that are grant-dependent or dependent on legislative appropriations face added uncertainty. However, the Alaska Performance Scholarship was described as a "poster child for sustainable funding."

Funding Uncertainty Impedes Program Planning

The level of student services varies according to resources available.

We tend not to invest funds systemically over the long haul. Some of that is a function is how money is made available through the legislature.

We are supporting many good programs, but we are not getting them to scale.

This needs to be a long-term investment. Completion can take 10 years. That's a long time to sustain services and a long time to measure.

We should all be pushing as a group for more education funding.

Specific Under-Funded Services Include Dual Enrollment and Counseling and other Student Supports

Some aspects of the field are under-resourced, for example support systems need more funding, particularly counseling.

Dual enrollment is grossly underfunded. Washington State fully funds dual enrollment. Here, parents and students end up paying.

There is no specific coordinator for dual credit. There is the CTE group but they also are lobbying for more funding.

Financial aid gets student in the door. The part that's missing is the support for them to be successful.

Messaging and Outreach

Messaging Content

Interviewees were asked to identify the single most important message to convey to the public on postsecondary access and completion. Most said the message should identify the variety of postsecondary options and let students know they will need skills obtained in postsecondary programs to compete for work and to fully enjoy their careers. They also said messaging should compare costs of education to the value of higher education for specific careers to show that postsecondary education has a financial return. Several interviewees said to convey the message that students can get a good education in Alaska. Finally, interviewees said Alaska youth needs to hear that postsecondary education will enable them not just to succeed personally, but to make a contribution to their family, community and state.

Variety of Postsecondary Options

It's not just about a BA.

One way or the other, there is something for everyone. Education is available to you.

Meet the students where they are. Help them self-actualize as much as possible. (Don't sell them someone else's vision of success.) What do they like to do?

Career Benefits

Students need skills from postsecondary education to compete for work.

We have to message the relevancy of what is being offered and how it allows students to get a job. The message depends on the population serving (younger people may not hear the message in the same way someone older would). This takes more time, energy, and resources, but is more effective.

The more education we have, the better likelihood that we have good choices all around.

Financial Benefits

Clear, local information about the cost and debt of higher education specific to careers in Alaska is important.

The idea of affording a college education. Many people turn a deaf ear. Mainstream media focus on highest cost schools. They forget that 80% or more of schools are affordable for most Americans.

Quality of Alaska Education

If you are interested in a lifetime career and living in Alaska, in almost every case there is an opportunity to get the education and training you need through an Alaskan education or training institution, including cooperative agreements with other states and countries.

High school students often want to get out of the state. But a lot of students end up coming back and graduating in-state. Why not start here?

Need to change perception of what we have to offer in the state so people don't feel they have to leave – especially for those who don't want to leave community.

Tools to Make a Difference

Rural/Alaska Native students need to hear how much positive impact it will have at three levels: 1) the student, 2) their family, and 3) their community and the future of their community. The motivation to come back after postsecondary and do something positive for their communities is a big one for some students.

Have pride in yourself and in Alaska. Some way to use pride as the reason you want to better yourself. Pave the way for your family.

Messaging Strategies

Key strategies suggested during the interviews reflect well-proven marketing and public relations principles. For example, people respond to messengers they trust and relate to. Different audiences respond to different media. Messages must be clear and consistent. Messages from different sources should reinforce and leverage each other.

USE TRUSTED MESSENGERS

Be culturally proficient (understand the complexity of Alaska cultures) and make cultural connections within Western institutions, for example the UA system.

Having a live person they can actually talk with is important.

It is important to have messaging coming from neutral trusted party.

Be open and acknowledging of differences: "We recognize you are not all the same."

MATCH MEDIA TO THE AUDIENCE

Build social media networks of people with interest in making sure information is out there.

Our state website is not the most user friendly.

Public service on radio. Billboards. Information in schools and communities. Public libraries. Posters. Whatever it takes. People get their news so many different ways.

Visual and social media. Being involved with community groups. Having information there. Speaking at community groups.

Start the conversation early, for example online, to help students understand tests, assessments, classes, programs, outcomes (how much occupations will pay, how much they can earn).

Our youth are way more worldly than we think. Global messaging through TV, Internet, movies, etc.

Encourage students to spread the word once they have gone through a program, for example on social media.

USE CLEAR, CONSISTENT MESSAGES

It has to be clear and simple.

Strong consistent messaging across society: parents, teachers, business community.

Tie industry and jobs into the messaging: what actual jobs can I get after this training?

Emphasize that college-ready and career-ready are both important. Take the stigma of not entering a four-year program out of the equation.

COLLABORATE WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Collaboration with the legislature and the governor, getting holistic support from those in control of messaging statewide.

Engage with rural communities to increase rural participation and tracking.

Engage with industry to address a very significant labor shortage in several industries.

Public Policies that Affect Access and Completion

Policies that Support the Field

Provision of financial aid, in particular the Alaska Performance Scholarship and the UA Scholars program, was named by multiple interviewees a key policy to promote postsecondary success. Similarly, to take advantage of performance scholarships, Alaska students need access to the courses necessary to qualify for the scholarship. Other supportive policies mentioned include easier credit transfers among postsecondary institutions, availability of dual-enrollment courses, requiring students to take the ACT/SAT, distribution of the ACPE's College Career Guide, and expansion of online learning. Interviewees were mixed on the efficacy of eliminating the HSGQE. Some felt this action increased access to postsecondary education while others thought it would make students less prepared.

Policies that May Impede the Field

When asked about public policies that present barriers to postsecondary access and completion, many interviewees said Alaska's public education system must prepare students better for postsecondary education, including by means of general education funding. Some interviewees felt more needs to be done to streamline credit-transfer policies at UA and to make financial aid less restricted. Others said local school districts are both too flexible (with respect to course offerings) and too inflexible (with respect to place-appropriate scheduling and content).

Comments also addressed areas where policies may be needed, for example for consistent placement assessment at UA, to encourage more attention to early childhood, and to better align secondary academic preparation with postsecondary curricula.

Flexibility

UA is a huge system and hard to work through (for students and for other institutions). It's hard to transfer between MAUs. It would help if UA would communicate better, both externally and internally.

One-size-fits-all approach in K-12, e.g. asking rural Alaska Natives to focus on school during spring subsistence activity and lack of culturally relevant curricula. Not pressing for place-based learning statewide. Students need to see themselves reflected.

Consistency

UA doesn't have consistent placement assessment for incoming students.

Alaska adopted Alaska standards but not Common Core. But some school districts said, we're adopting the Common Core. That's a clear sign of independence. They don't record transcripts the same way, so we can't get transcripts transferred. Too much independence is given to school districts.

Policies Needed

There is a lack of funding for early childhood education. We need to value education more generally by having universal Pre-K. There is a real impact in those early years.

We need some policies around collaboration and common requirements. A big barrier is getting secondary schools to prepare students to a college

We have a piecemeal approach across the state. Every district, every school offers customized coursework for their students. When students transfer it can be hard. It's hard to move between schools both at high school and postsecondary levels. We have all this flexibility but it comes at a cost.

standard.

All university campuses need to integrate use of testing into admissions policies.

Reduction in rigor does not serve kids well. You can take classes in high school when it's free, or pay for remedial classes in college.

FINANCING

Many parents can't afford to take out big loans. We need to make sure students have opportunity to finance their education.

Policy Implications of Building an Educational Culture

As described above, the theme of building a more robust culture of postsecondary education in Alaska was evident in many interviews and in the program provider survey. In this context, the word "culture" encompasses several related concepts. First, interviewees emphasized the importance of communicating that postsecondary education means not only college attendance or a four-year degree but also a wide range of technical credentials. Second, a postsecondary culture must address the temptation for high school graduates to forego postsecondary training to take jobs that seem relatively high-paying but have little career potential. A third element is the process of planning and preparing early to ensure a student has the academic and financial resources to take advantage of postsecondary options. This includes the roles of elementary and secondary schools and the need for broadly held goals for what it means to be ready for postsecondary education.

Because the task of cultural change is so far-reaching, individual programs are limited in how much impact they can have unilaterally. Policies that are broadly embraced by the field will leverage everyone's efforts. Among the areas that could be addressed in this way are the following:

- **How to present students with the array of college and technical postsecondary options available to them.**
- **What kinds of specific planning and preparation should all students participate in?**
- **What, specifically, is the role of access and completion programs in this process and what are the roles of other key stakeholders?**

COLLEGE AND TECHNICAL POSTSECONDARY OPTIONS

Postsecondary access and completion is not necessarily a four-year degree. We really mean everything up to that four-year degree and beyond. Certificates, additional training. And there is so much need. If you only get a welding certificate, it's not that you're not meeting your potential, we need welders.

Make sure that students are strategic in what they choose to study: that it's going to be in a field that's high-wage and high-demand.

We've got tech certificates through doctoral programs. We have something for everybody.

We have this notion that postsecondary education is not necessary in Alaska. You can get very wealthy without it. It's challenging to get in the door without a postsecondary education. Those folks are then stuck in entry level positions. Those pay very well for entry level but they don't allow for advancement.

There is confusion about the different pathways available. There is need for a coordinated effort to communicate opportunities and demand in different industries. The challenge is that demand patterns change and we need coordinated effort to respond to changes in demand.

Misconception: postsecondary education is not a worthwhile investment. It's too expensive. It's true for some fields. You have to do your math, understand what you want after your education. Overall it still pays off.

Planning and Preparing

In general, students don't understand the network of programs available and how to use it.

Students are going into college not knowing what to do. They're lost. Those with disabilities don't know what to do. Orientation needs to help kids know what to expect.

It's really important that you get that sense you need to do something beyond high school. You need to have a plan. It's not just college. Students are not understanding what's out there besides college.

Just because you get accepted doesn't mean a student is ready.

Educate parents on how to help guide their kids towards college or training.

High schools aren't talking to students about how to pay for their education.

A big question people have is affordability. Another is scheduling of classes because people need to work but want to go to school/college but can't afford logistics of the two. Not having ability to do this from home really challenges people in many locations across Alaska.

Postsecondary is a spectrum of offerings. People are not aware that it includes vocational training. There is also a social stigma associated with technical training.

Some kids in K-12 are prepared very well for postsecondary education, some are not. We still need to address the problem but also recognize that some are succeeding.

Role of Access and Completion Programs

People don't understand what access and completion means. They need more information.

A lot of the money through messaging and marketing is centered at main campuses. It's important to consider who the students are who we are marketing to through campaigns with regional photos, people, so people in region can have the "I can do it too" feeling. How inclusive is the process when access and completion programs are being designed and implemented? Are rural/Alaska Native representatives at the table when toolkits and initiatives are being developed?

> *It's important to communicate what it really costs to go to college/student debt. A lot of conversation about costs of higher education and student debt is driven through New England (where most expensive institutions are). It's not reflective of the situation in Alaska.*

Other Comments and Suggestions with Potential Policy Implications

Regional training centers teach technical skills but also life skills. We have seen incredible success for completion and retention of these students.

A good resource I refer to is the Heckman equation. (For any complex social issue, "Invest + Develop + Sustain = Gain.") Look at where investment of dollars leads to successful individuals. The more dollars you invest in the 0-5 age range, the bigger the impact. When you're working with young children you're also working with parents.

My employees all know the process of modeling (positive behavior). They can show young parents appropriate ways to interact. We got amazing feedback from families about how we helped them as a whole, not just the kids.

> *The (access and completion) problem is way more social. There are families who can't get their kids to school or who work unusual shifts. We have to remember that poverty and social inequality are too much for one coalition to deal with. There are so many varied reasons why kids don't do well in school. You can't fix the problem in high school. It's more pervasive.*

The tagline "65 by 25" fits in with Shaping Alaska's Future. The university went town by town in Alaska and did listening sessions. What does Alaska think of the University? Created five themes, each one encompassing 8 or 10 issues, including student achievement and attainment. The point is, 65 by 25 is great on its own, but it also fits with

Shaping Alaska's Future. But 2025 is not that far away. The sooner we can start using this information, the better.

If I could change one thing, I would have Alaska be part of Complete College America. We need to join this. We started Stay on Track way before Hawaii. Hawaii engaged in Complete College America, and they are making huge strides.

We need to be clearer about what "postsecondary" actually means.

The challenge is effective outreach: we need to go to where the students are. The people doing it need to be their peers. They need to look like them, talk like them, so that they are credible. We don't have the funds to do that kind of outreach. The ones already planning to go to higher education come to us, but the at-risk ones don't necessarily.

We're working on workforce development plans, getting employers to identify what their needs are. The objective is to take that information and go to training and education components, and see how needs can line up with what they offer. I hear frustration from everyone: students, parents, employers.

The most important thing is that we recognize there is a big gap and that we work toward finding every way possible to prioritize education.

Recommendations

This section addresses potential next steps for the Network to consider as it develops its ongoing action agenda. Recommendations are based on findings from all the major study tasks, including environmental research, survey research, policy research, and executive interviews.

A. Expand efforts to promote partnering and networking among access and completion programs and between those programs and other key stakeholders and institutions.

This should be a precursor to efforts to "scale up" particular strategies or programs, with the exception of proven scholarship programs. The access and completion field in Alaska is fragmented, partly because many of the programs are new, work in geographically dispersed areas, have uncertain funding, or are housed within large (therefore slow-moving) institutions. Interviews also suggest that programs focused on rural or Alaska Native populations and programs and educational institutions have differing perspectives from those designed primarily for more urban, majority-culture populations. Programs working at different grade levels also tend to see the world differently.

Finally, interviews suggest there are additional access and completion efforts that do not currently see themselves as part of the field in Alaska but could be important contributors. This includes, for example, school districts that provide dual-credit courses or other "fast-track" postsecondary options, regional nonprofits that already provide many education services, and scholarship programs at nonprofit and for-profit organizations that provide more than just scholarships but are not formal access and completion programs. An example of the latter is ANCSA corporations that provide training and leadership development for shareholders along with scholarships.

Addressing this and other fragmentation, such as developing common definitions for key terms and a complementary vision of what "success" means with respect to access and completion, will leverage the impact of the whole field and provide a fertile environment for expanding individual efforts.

B. Engage with school districts, government, employers, and other stakeholders to help build an Alaskan culture that supports postsecondary educational aspirations and attainment for all students.

This complex, ongoing task begins with a common vision of postsecondary education as the natural and expected culmination of a process that begins in kindergarten. It requires coordinated strategies and messaging. It includes helping students look beyond their first job to develop lifetime education and career goals.

The need for Alaskans to more fully appreciate the importance of postsecondary education and training was referenced often in stakeholder interviews. Similar cultural barriers have been observed in access-and-completion inventories of other states—for example Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Alaska's geographic isolation, the relative youth of its educational institutions, cultural affinity for home communities, and suspicion fostered by the historical period of culturally repressive boarding schools and misguided attempts to eradicate indigenous languages have all impeded a strong culture of higher education. A more recent factor

is the perception of ready access in Alaska to relatively high-paying natural resource and support-industry jobs that, initially at least, required minimal postsecondary academic preparation.

C. Work with school districts to raise the level of preparation for postsecondary education among high school graduates.

This step follows logically from the one above and requires common definitions of what it means to be "postsecondary-ready" with respect to major types of career goals. In 2011, the Alaska Advisory Task Force on Higher Education & Career Readiness (HECR) set a goal for Alaska that, by 2017, every Alaska student will complete high school with sufficient skills to enter the workforce or a postsecondary program without need for remedial coursework in reading, writing or math. With 2015 approaching, the goal is clearly ambitious but just as clearly important. The task force based their goal on an extensive analysis and discussion of the factors that contribute to lack of student readiness.

The efforts of the HECR task force were expanded upon in a 2012 analysis prepared for the Alaska Legislature by the University of Alaska (*Developmental Education at University of Alaska*) that concluded "Graduation rates for students requiring developmental coursework are about half that of well prepared students for both two-year and four-year programs." The report further noted that students who require remediation in both math and English are very unlikely to complete a degree program within 150 percent of the nominal time for that program and concluded that simply placing students in developmental classes without additional strategies and support is not likely to be effective.

The HECR and UA reports include discussion of a wide variety of steps that are being, or could be, taken within and beyond the university to improve student outcomes. Many of those steps could involve or coordinate with Network efforts.

D. Further assess the extent to which access and completion programs are able to meet the needs of older students.

Survey and interview data collected for this report suggest older students are not a high priority for most programs, at least they do not seem to be widely and actively targeted. In particular, consider strategies tailored to those 35 and older with some college but no degree who may want to return to school to pursue postsecondary goals. These students typically face special challenges balancing the time and financial commitments of school and home life.

E. Encourage completion of the Alaska Statewide Longitudinal Data System (known as "ANSWERS"), now in development, to support planning and evaluation.

ANSWERS, *Alaska Navigator: Statewide Workforce and Education-Related Statistics*, is a comprehensive data integration system that will link de-identified data from multiple sources to support more robust outcomes analysis for educational and workforce-development planning, evaluation and policy-making. The "P-20W SLDS" will ultimately combine multi-year data covering preschool through high school and postsecondary training and into the workforce, including financial aid. This kind of extended, longitudinal data is key to understanding the full need for, and impact of, access and completion and many other types of programs.

Implementing such a system is beyond the capability of individual agencies or programs, however, because of the need to link and cross-reference confidential data from multiple sources. Yet without that data, practitioners have had to depend on short-term and surrogate measures. (Surrogate measures are used to infer a result when actual data about the result is unavailable. For example, a student's stated intention to pursue a particular career goal is a surrogate, and less satisfactory, indicator of postsecondary achievement than an actual work history would be.)

F. Continue to explore and clarify broad program priorities within the access and completion field to create a continuum of services with common goals.

This includes how programs aimed at different levels of the educational ladder work together to form a continuum of services and what their common goals should be, along with other fundamental questions that help the field arrive at more harmonious goals across programs. For example, interviews show there is a difference of opinion about how much to emphasize full-time versus part-time postsecondary attendance. UA in recent years has increased efforts to encourage "completers," i.e., students who take a full load of courses and aim to complete an associate degree within two years or a bachelors degree within four years. Requirements by many scholarship programs for students to carry a minimum number of credits (typically 12 or 15) amplify UA's approach. The strategy has been shown nationally to be effective at raising postsecondary graduation rates, but may also lead to unintended consequences. Interviews with UA students and Network stakeholders suggest that pressure to take more courses can alienate and deter students who are not confident of their preparation or who face financial, family, and other constraints.

Another area where consonance across the field will improve effectiveness is in efforts to nurture a college/career culture (above). This includes not only mutually reinforcing messaging but, where possible, complementary strategies for targeting specific populations. In this regard, the study team found it challenging to interpret some information collected for this report because of differences in the terminology used to describe strategies and conditions and also differences in perceptions among program providers about, for example, some scholarship requirements.

G. Actively support expansion of reliable broadband Internet access to every Alaska community.

This is a key step toward giving all Alaska students the same level of opportunity, not just for postsecondary success, but for career and personal success. While a relatively small portion of the population remains dependent on dial-up Internet, statewide broadband access is a keystone for postsecondary access and completion. Not only is more and more college and career coursework delivered online, but many of the support services students need are also made available that way. Internet access is also key to the overarching challenge of nurturing a culture of postsecondary education because of the way the technology can affect how people, especially those in relative isolation, view the world.

Appendix 1 - Alaska Vocational and Career Trade Schools

The education and training programs below participate in workforce development strategies endorsed by the Alaska Workforce Investment Board. Their enrollment, completion rates, and other performance indicators are tracked by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

A Head of Time
ABC of Alaska
Academy of Hair Design
ACH Consulting
AKA Hauling
Alaska Association of Realtors
Alaska Bar Stars
Alaska Bible College
Alaska Bible Institute
Alaska Building Science Network
Alaska Career College
Alaska CHARR
Alaska Christian College
Alaska Computer Business Solutions LLC
Alaska Craftsman Home Program
Alaska Floats & Skis
Alaska Geographic
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Alaska Institute of Oriental Medicine, Acupuncture & Massage Therapy
Alaska Ironworkers
Alaska Job Corps
Alaska Joint Electrical Apprenticeship and Training Trust
Alaska Laborers Training Trust
Alaska Marine Safety Education Association
Alaska Med Code
Alaska Mountaineering School
Alaska Nail & Skin Academy
Alaska Nautical School
Alaska Operating Engineers/Employers Training Trust
Alaska Pacific University
Alaska Policy Forum
Alaska Teamster-Employer Service Training Trust
Alaska Technical
Alaska Technical Center
Alaska Trowel Trades
Alaska Waters Consulting
Alaska West Training Center
Alaska Works
Alaska's Institute of Technology (AVTEC)
Alyeska Helicopters
Amundsen Education Center
Anchorage Area Plumbers & Pipefitters Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee
Anchorage CHARR
Arctic Safety Training and Consulting
Assist to Succeed Anchorage
Associated General Contractors of Alaska
Beacon OHSS
Calypso Farm & Ecology Center
Center for Employment Education
Charter College, Anchorage
Charter College, Wasilla
Cherokee Riders
Conscious Solutions
Delta Mine Training Center
Elmendorf Aero Club
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Environmental Management Inc.
Fairbanks Area Carpenter Training Center
Fairbanks Area Plumber and Pipefitters
Fairbanks Flight Train
Forensic Solutions
Galena Interior Learning Academy
Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 97
Heritage Place
Ilisagvik College
Insurance License Preparation of Alaska
IUBAC Lc 1 Bricklayers and Craftsman
Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District
Kindred Spirits School of Massage
Laborers Local 942
Lanas Institute of Professional Nail Technology
Land and Sea Aviation
Liberty Tax Service

Literacy Council of Alaska
MetrOasis Advanced Training Center
Multimed
Nine Star Education and Employment Services
North Star Computing
Northern Industrial Training
Northern Trust Real Estate Academy
NTL Alaska, Inc.
Nu-Solutions Consulting
Painters and Allied Trades, Alaska Local 1959
Partners for Progress in Delta, Inc.
Pile drivers, Bridge, Dock Builders & Divers Local 2520
Real Estate Associate Learning Systems for Alaskans
Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor Training
Royse & Associates
Satori Group Inc.
School of Integrating Shiatsu Alaska
SERRC Alaska Educational Resource Center
Shear Fire Design Academy of Alaska
Sheet Metal Workers Local Union #23
Southern Alaska Carpenters Union Training Center
Southern Region EMS Council
Southwest Alaska Vocational and Education Center
St. Hermans Theological Seminary
Take Flight Alaska
Team One Alaska
The Heart Institute
Trend Setters School of Beauty
TSS - The Safety Specialists
University of Alaska Anchorage
University of Alaska Anchorage, Community and Technical College
University of Alaska Anchorage, Kenai
University of Alaska Anchorage, Kodiak
University of Alaska Anchorage, Mat-Su
University of Alaska Anchorage, Military Program
University of Alaska Anchorage, Prince William Sound
University of Alaska Fairbanks
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Bristol Bay
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Chukchi
University of Alaska Fairbanks, CTC
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Interior-Aleutians
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Kuskokwim
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Northwest
University of Alaska Southeast, Juneau
University of Alaska Southeast, Ketchikan
University of Alaska Southeast, Sitka
University of Alaska, Fairbanks - Fisheries Division
University of Alaska, Mining and Petroleum Training Service
Via Vita Midwifery Foundation
VIP Alaska
Vocational Medical Trainers of Alaska
Vocational Training and Resource Center
Wayland Baptist University
Wilderness Medicine Institute of NOLS
Wilson and Wilson CPAs, Inc.
WinCertification
Wisdom & Associates, Inc.
Yuut Elitnaurviat
Zender Environmental Health & Research Group

Appendix 2 – Additional Research Topics

Practitioners in the Alaska Access and Completion field who were interviewed during the study identified a variety of information they said could be useful. Suggestions addressed program structure, operations, and targeting, as well as how programs are perceived by students and others. These suggestions helped guide the content of the program survey, however not all the questions could be fully incorporated within the scope of a single questionnaire. Examples of questions that may warrant further exploration include:

How Programs are Structured

- Does the program have grade requirements or other eligibility criteria?
- How is the program delivered, for example, is travel required, or high speed Internet?
- Is there an industry-sector affiliation?
- Is the program "home-grown" (locally designed to respond to an identified need) or is it intended to work more broadly (for example, is it purchased through grants from a national developer)?
- Is the program "student-driven" or "job/employer-driven"?

How Programs Operate

- How do programs interact with each other, especially interactions between secondary and postsecondary programs and by pooling resources?
- What are the levels of complexity/comprehensiveness of programs?
- To what extent are programs ongoing or short-term initiatives?
- What tools do programs typically use to help students?
- How and where are programs innovating?
- What is the "rate of return" (i.e., the success rate as a function of cost) for various types of programs?

How Programs Are Perceived

- How do programs market themselves and what is the level of public awareness of the programs?
- What do programs do to reflect rural and Alaska Native perspectives?
- How do students experience the program?