

Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Inventory

Prepared by:

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Prepared for:

Alaska Postsecondary Access
and Completion Network



Purpose of the Study

- Profile Alaska access and completion
- Identify key issues and policies
- Recommend ways to strengthen access and completion efforts
- Develop initial data for a “directory” of programs



Study Methodology

- Key education and employment statistics
- Survey of program providers
 - Descriptive information
 - Strategic issues
- Executive Interviews with Network members and other stakeholders
- Analysis of policies that affect access and completion

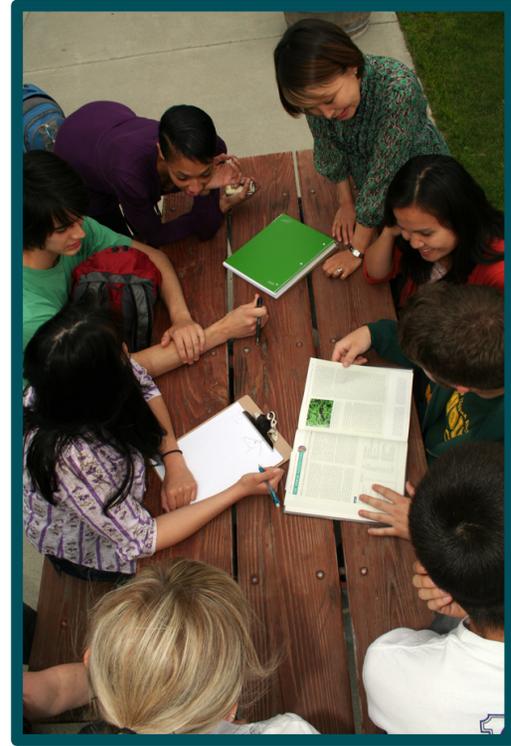


What We Learned

- Secondary Statistics
- Alaska Programs
- Key Issues and Policies
- Recommendations



Secondary Statistics



Postsecondary Education in Alaska

Compared to most other states, Alaskans are...

- Less likely to have a postsecondary degree
- Less likely to be enrolled fulltime in public higher education
- Less likely to earn a degree once enrolled
- Less likely to complete a degree within the expected time

Alaska is one of 9 states for which the percentage of adults with a college degree declined between 2000 and 2011.



Alaska Employment Trends

- Statewide employment ↑ 11 percent by 2022
(*DOLWD*)
- Aging workforce → job openings and demand for elder services
- Fastest growing sectors:
 - Healthcare and social assistance
 - Oil and gas (includes mining)
 - Professional and business services
 - Leisure and hospitality



Alaska Postsecondary Needs

- **By 2018***
 - 16,000 fewer jobs for those with only a high school degree
 - 8,000 more jobs will require a Bachelor's
- **Demand for technical certifications will continue to increase**

**National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)*



Access and Completion Programs

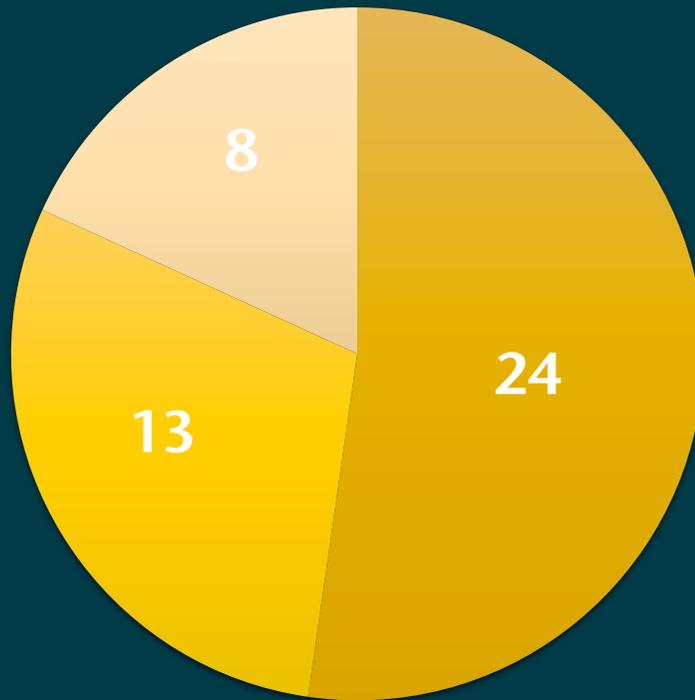


Programs Surveyed

- 54 access and completion programs identified
- 40 responded to the survey
- Data on 8 more from secondary research



Types of Programs



■ University of Alaska

■ State of Alaska

■ Other (nonprofit, national, school district)

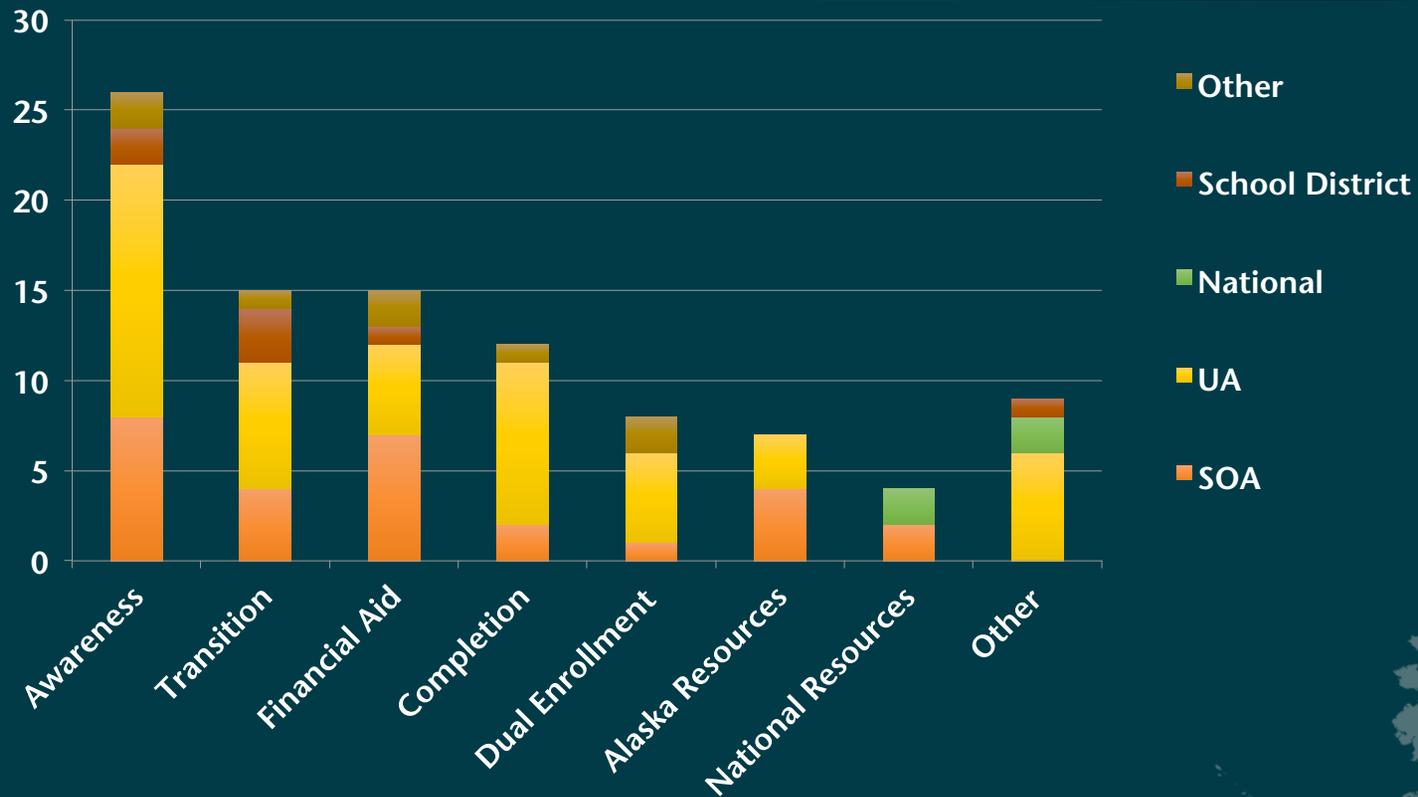


Types of Programs

- Most offer a mix of services
 - information, financial aid, workshops, counseling, career exploration, advocacy, academic support, and more
- Three-quarters partner with school districts.
- Three quarters partner with UA



Types of Programs



Types of Programs

- Nearly 30% less than 10 years old
- 20% urban, 10% rural, 70% both
- 7 programs serve specific school districts
- 4 serve only Anchorage



Population Served

Most programs:

- Target high school or college-age
- Focus on students moving directly from high school to postsecondary

Age Group	#	%
Grades K-5	3	6%
Grades 6-8	12	25
High school	34	71
18 – 24 years	31	65
25 – 35 years	21	44
Over 35 years	16	33



Missions and Definitions of Success

How programs define their focus:

- 60% by educational level (high school, college, etc.)
- 20% by type of career preparation (business, construction, healthcare, etc.)
- 20% by skill set (financial, career-readiness, leadership, etc)



Missions and Definitions of Success

- Attainment of a certificate or degree (15)
- Enrollment in a postsecondary program (9)
- Postsecondary application or intention to apply (6)
- 17 other measures from academic performance to course-load to specific tests



Other Program Information

Initial database for a directory of access and completion programs

- Name and contact info
- Types of strategies and services
- Missions and populations/locations served
- Budget, year started, etc.





Key Issues and Policies

Greatest Program Strengths

Programs differ on perceived strengths

- Strategic point of intervention
- Access to scholarship \$\$
- Flexibility, broad outreach
- Partnerships and relationships



Needs of the Field

- Funding and other resources
- Technical skills and support
- Communications and collaboration
- Data
- Coordinated messaging



Needs

Funding and Other Resources

- State budget cuts and federal sequestration
- Uncertain grants/long-term funding
- Lack of time and staff
- Funding for low-income students



Needs

Technical Skills and Support

- Marketing and social media expertise (13)
- Databases, grant-writing, advocacy, fundraising and volunteer coordination
- Cultural and management training



Needs

Communications and Collaboration

- Clearinghouse for events, resources and best practices
- Coordination among postsecondary institutions, access and completion programs, and school districts
- Networking and conferences



Needs

Data

- Comprehensive data on issues and population
- Updates on new laws and regulation
- Information about other programs
- Assessment data



Needs

Coordinated Messaging

- Trusted messengers are knowledgeable, neutral, and culturally proficient
- Match media to the audience
- Clear, consistent talking points and terminology



Challenges in Alaska

- Lack of a postsecondary culture
- Building and maintaining partnerships
- Need for continuum of services
- Measuring program impacts



Challenges

Lack of a Postsecondary Culture

- Parental mistrust of educational institutions
- Lack of local role models and knowledge of opportunities
- Low-skill jobs with relatively high initial pay
- Misperception that postsecondary only means college



Challenges

Building and maintaining partnerships

- Building awareness of programs
- Turnover in high school staff
- Getting full buy-in from administrators and communities



Challenges

Need for comprehensive services

- Infrastructure gaps
 - Distance
 - Internet
 - Information systems
- Cultural complexity and variety of educational needs
- Lack of a comprehensive strategy for student support



Challenges

Measuring Program Impacts

- Multiple definitions of success
- Lack of longitudinal data linking secondary, postsecondary and workforce participation
- Subtle or deferred program impacts hard to track



Access and Completion Policies

Policies that support the field

- Provision of financial aid, especially APS and UA Scholars
- Easier transfers of academic credit
- Availability of dual enrollment
- Requirement for ACT/SAT/WorkKeys
- Expansion of quality online learning



Policies

Policies that may impede the field

- Mismatch between high-school preparation and demands on postsecondary students
- Credit transfers and financial aid still need to be less restricted
- Size and complexity of UA system



Policies

Policies that may impede the field

- Lack of funding for early childhood education
- Inconsistent approaches to placement testing across the university



Recommendations to Strengthen



Action and Completion Efforts

Recommendations

1. Engage with stakeholders to build a culture of postsecondary achievement

- Promote the value of postsecondary achievement
- Develop a common vision of student preparation
- Coordinate strategies and messaging



Recommendations

2. Expand partnering and networking

- Among programs
 - Align visions, strategies and terminology
- Between programs and other partners
 - Improve communications and share goals



Recommendations

3. Explore and clarify program priorities to create a continuum of services with common goals
 - Full-time and part-time
 - Scholarship requirements
 - Rural students



Recommendations

4. Assess how well the access and completion system meets the needs of older students

- Finances
- Time
- Refresher courses



Recommendations

5. Support development of better longitudinal data

- ANSWERS – Alaska Navigator: Statewide Workforce and Education-Related Statistics
- P-20W SLDS – Integrated data on Alaska students from pre-school through grade 20 and beyond, including workforce data



Recommendations

6. Support statewide broadband for equal access to:

- Information about postsecondary options and requirements
- Access to support programs
- Courses and course materials
- Inspiration and an expanded world-view



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January 2015



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Questions?



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