



NCAN State Policy Toolkit

The State Policy Toolkit reflects NCAN's [Model State Policy Agenda](#), which aims to provide NCAN members and partners, particularly those in networks or coalitions, with a guide to develop their own state policy goals and agenda. Moreover, the toolkit provides examples of effective policies and programs to help organizations develop and guide their state policy advocacy strategy. Each installment topic is derived from NCAN's model agenda and is categorized under **affordability** or **talent development**. Subcategories for affordability include *need-based aid* and *funding strategies*. Beneath talent development are *preparation*, *access*, and *success*.

Focus on Need-Based Aid

NCAN's stance: Given that low-income students, students who are first in their family to enroll in higher education, and students of color are least likely to go to college, states should provide the opportunity for all students to continue their education after high school. States should: (1) establish a minimum threshold for need-based aid and not dip below it, (2) design state aid programs that align with the economic needs of the state, and (3) use early awareness strategies to set expectations and provide financial resources.

Establish a minimum threshold for need-based aid and don't dip below it.

[Need-based state aid](#) targets students and families who need the most help paying for college. Unlike merit-based aid, it does not take other factors such as academic achievement into consideration. A vast majority of states have programs that award need-based aid in the form of grants, and most of this financial assistance is awarded to students who are attending an institution in their home state. This is not always the case, however. Below are resources that provide insight into states' need-based aid policies and appropriations.

- The National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs conducts an annual survey that illustrates the trends and current status of state aid. [The resulting reports](#) include the amount of need-based aid awarded by state, as well as nationally. Data from the 2015-16 academic year are available [here](#).
- The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators has developed [an interactive tool](#) that directs users to each of the 50 states' aid program website.
- The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association produces an annual [State Higher Education Finance](#), or SHEF report. It seeks to "broaden understanding of the context and consequences of multiple public policy decisions" in state legislatures. Data from fiscal year 2016 are available [here](#).

Design state programs that align with the economic needs of the state, encouraging students to pursue opportunities that align college and career.

Programs that align with the economic needs of individual states have been established throughout the country. Most resulted from actions by state legislatures, executives, or public-private partnerships.

- In August 2017, the North Carolina state legislature enacted a bill that created the Board of Postsecondary Education Credentials. The board's [primary goal](#) is to "review and make recommendations regarding a statewide system of postsecondary education that links industry, corporations, and businesses in this State with educators, government, and community organizations to identify workforce skills and training needs and to ensure that appropriate courses of study and vocational training are available to North Carolinians."



- In May 2015, the [National Skills Coalition](#) announced an initiative that is providing four states with technical and financial assistance in an effort to “create policies that close skill gaps and create more equitable, efficient, and aligned state workforce development and education systems.” After becoming a beneficiary, California amended [Assembly Bill 2148](#) to improve the alignment between workforce and education programs and the state’s labor market.
- In April 2015, the governor of Rhode Island announced the initiative [Real Jobs Rhode Island](#). Its goal is to connect employers with prospective employees who have skills the employer needs, and vice versa. A November 2017 [report](#) demonstrates that the initiative is having a substantial impact: During those 18 months, it placed 1,033 new hires, accounted for the completion of 35 college internships and 123 high school internships, and provided 681 workers with a new skill.

Use early awareness strategies to set expectations and provide financial resources — such as early commitment scholarships, place-based promise scholarships, awareness campaigns, and children’s savings accounts/college savings accounts.

Early awareness strategies for higher education have proven effective for decades. The means to achieve this result vary, and the most successful campaigns include a combination of these strategies. Moreover, such programs are strengthened when they are backed by state legislatures.

- **Early Commitment Scholarships** — In 1990, through the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Indiana created the statewide [21st Century Scholars Program](#). It covers the full amount of tuition and fees [under two conditions](#): the student’s family must meet household income criteria, and the student must sign a pledge to meet academic and behavioral requirements. Given that this pledge is made when students are in 7th grade, this initiative serves doubly as an early awareness campaign and an early commitment scholarship.
- **Place-Based Scholarships** — The [Kalamazoo Promise](#) in Michigan allows Kalamazoo Public Schools graduates to apply for a scholarship that covers up to [75 percent of tuition and fees](#), depending on how long applicants have been in the three-school district. To remain eligible, students must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA at their postsecondary institution, take at least 12 credit hours per semester, and meet other requirements. [Research shows](#) that this form of scholarship can be an effective way for school districts to recruit, retain, and graduate high school students.
- **Awareness Campaigns** — Founded in 1988 in Columbus, OH, I Know I Can (IKIC) provides 6th-8th graders and their families in all Columbus City Schools with access to [college preparation programs](#). Students remain enrolled in IKIC throughout their higher education, and are also eligible for grants and scholarships. Services include mentoring, financial assistance, and one-on-one advising.
- **Savings Accounts** — [Maryland 529 Savings Plan](#): Formerly known as the College Savings Plan of Maryland, Maryland 529 offers [two types of plans](#) to save for college. One, investment plans, allows families to invest at their own rate and in a portfolio of their choice. These funds can then be used not only for tuition, but also fees, room and board, and school supplies. The second option is the prepaid tuition model, which allows families to pay for tuition before the beneficiary has enrolled. The primary benefit of this plan is that it locks in the current tuition rate, thereby guarding families from future increases. Funds from this plan can go toward tuition and mandatory fees, and be applied to almost every accredited two- or four-year institution in and outside of Maryland. In October 2016, Morningstar, a Chicago-based, independent investment research firm, produced a rankings of the nation’s top education savings accounts. The rankings are available [here](#).



Establish a State Higher Education Funding Strategy

NCAN's stance: State funding for higher education is still recovering to pre-Great Recession levels. States should develop a predictable, goal-oriented strategy for funding higher education. States should: (1) Set a state attainment goal for the population that includes both traditional and nontraditional students and align that goal with state workforce needs; (2) prioritize efforts to assist underrepresented students in overcoming barriers to accessing and completing postsecondary education; (3) devise incentives for institutions to increase degree attainment for adults lacking a few credits, and student-friendly financial aid deadlines and procedures; (4) develop a tuition-setting policy that is affordable and predictable, includes passing a state budget without undue delay, and announces tuition increases on a timeline that allows institutions to respond; and (5) consider an incentive system for institutions that rewards student success.

Set a state attainment goal for the population that includes both traditional and nontraditional students and align that goal with state workforce needs.

State attainment goals have become increasingly popular in recent years, with projections illustrating the daunting scenario of an undereducated workforce. In fact, an estimated [65 percent](#) of job vacancies will require education beyond high school by the year 2020. Thus, the need for bold action is clear, as the national average attainment rate for educational achievement beyond high school was at a meager [45.8 percent](#) at the end of 2015. As of April 2017, [45 states](#) had either set an attainment goal or were in the process of developing one.

- In October 2017, the Education Commission of the States produced a [policy snapshot](#) that highlights state legislation built around creating attainment goals. The snapshot features each bill introduced in 2017, legislation signed into law in previous years, and context for the sense of urgency that has led a vast majority of states to adopt an attainment goal.
- In June 2011, several major higher education associations created the [National Commission on Higher Education Attainment](#) in an effort to truly nationalize this effort with the backing of institutions. The associations involved include the American Council on Education, the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Association of American Universities, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. The commission sent an [open letter](#) to institutions in January 2013, making the case for the urgency of this issue. The Commission's membership includes representatives from [17 higher education institutions](#).
- In May 2017, the governor of Oregon signed into law [HB 2311](#). The bill amended the state's previous attainment goal to include nontraditional students and to align the goal with Oregon's workforce needs. Goals in the bill include the population reaching 40-percent attainment of associate's degrees and 40-percent attainment of bachelor's degrees. An additional provision calls for the remaining 20 percent of the population to attain a high school diploma or equivalent.

Prioritize efforts to assist underrepresented students in overcoming barriers to accessing and completing postsecondary education (e.g., public-private partnerships, student supports, and bridge programs).

The means by which state legislatures can and have supported underrepresented students in higher education vary. While some lawmakers are providing supplementary tools to equip students with the resources necessary to enroll in higher education, an equal amount of effort should be put forth to ensure that students complete higher education and obtain gainful employment thereafter.



- Public-private partnerships – In an effort to establish a partnership between the manufacturing industry and higher education, the Colorado state legislature created a manufacturing sector partnership via [House Bill 13-1165](#). The legislation defines this as “a collaboration of business and industry, public workforce development, economic development, and education partners to ensure workers are prepared to meet the growing demands of the manufacturing industry sector in a geographical area.” Most importantly, the 2013 measure enables students to gain initial work experience and later explore additional opportunities by requiring that the program align directly with occupations in high demand and “provide academic and career counseling resources and services, and allow students to earn income while progressing along the career pathway.”
 - In July 2017, the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution released a [toolkit](#) titled, “Connecting Community Colleges with Employers: A Toolkit for Building Successful Partnerships.” The piece outlines how community colleges should seek out partnerships, identifies key characteristics for these partnerships, and lists practical steps for linking education with industry.
 - In January of 2012, IBM announced a [partnership](#) with San Jose State University. This academic program allows students to apply social networking skills and learn about internal and external use of social business solutions. About two years later, IBM announced an expansion in their partnership with higher education institutions, and [joined forces](#) with 27 other business schools and universities.
- Student supports – In September 2016, the California state legislature established the [California College Promise Innovation Grant Program](#). The California Community College Chancellor’s Office was thereby granted the ability to select 14 [community college districts](#) to receive the grant, for which a one-time, \$15 million budget was appropriated. Funds were allocated to narrow the achievement gap in those districts by supporting students from preparation through completion. Criteria for the grant include the ability to partner with a K-12 school district as well as a California State University system or University of California system institution. This measure not only aims to expand postsecondary access, but also provides financial support for students at multiple stages of their education journey.
 - In August 2017, the nonprofit arm of Educational Testing Service (ETS) produced [analyses](#) that illustrate the progress made since President Obama announced his goal in February 2009 for the United States to once again lead the world in postsecondary education attainment. The report depicts the current state of attainment by degree level and race/ethnicity and outlines data useful for a potential targeted intervention.
- Bridge programs – In September 2014, the [Center for American Progress](#) (CAP) produced a report highlighting the best practices of three public universities that are serving traditionally underserved students exceptionally well: the University of California, Riverside, the University of South Florida Tampa campus, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC). At each institution, historical completion gaps across racial lines are nonexistent, and enrollment of Pell Grant recipients increased by as much as 132 percent between 2008 and 2012. In interviews with CAP, institution officials cited summer bridge programs as key contributors to their students’ success. UNCC, for instance, has a [summer bridge program](#) that has been in place since 1986, and the programs’ participants have a retention and graduation rate that is higher than that of non-participants.

Set student-friendly financial aid deadlines and procedures, and devise incentives for institutions to increase degree attainment for adults lacking a few credits.

- Adult attainment – In November 2010, the Pennsylvania state legislature overturned the governor’s veto of [House Bill 101](#). The bill includes a provision that allows higher education institutions to enroll adult students in coursework free of tuition charges.



- In October 2013, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) released the results of its [Project Win-Win](#). In an effort to locate and contact individuals who were “within striking distance” of completing an associate’s degree, IHEP leveraged state and National Student Clearinghouse data to encourage near-completers to reenroll in higher education. IHEP successfully inspired 1,668 students to re-enroll, and 408 indicated that they plan to do so. The report provides recommendations for organizations that wish to pursue a similar effort.
- Student-friendly financial aid deadlines and procedures – In April 2016, via [House Bill 7019](#), the Florida state legislature required the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education to produce a report that studies the impact that federal, state, and institutional financial aid policies have on college affordability. The report parameters require an emphasis on understanding what factors have the largest impact on actual cost of attendance in an effort to spur affordability.
 - The Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) at the U.S. Department of Education has a [webpage](#) that identifies the requirements for students to apply for aid in each state. While some states only mandate that students complete the FAFSA, others require students to file additional forms in order to be eligible for state aid. However, for some states, FSA simply directs students to their financial office.

Develop a tuition-setting policy that is affordable and predictable, includes passing a state budget without undue delay, and announces tuition increases on a timeline that allows institutions to respond.

The decision of whether or not to increase tuition rates is typically made once state legislatures have made budget appropriations, and such decisions [hinge on the amount](#) allocated for higher education in the state budget. This unpredictability can make it difficult for students to budget for their education, and in turn have a negative impact on college affordability.

- [The National Conference of State Legislatures](#) produced a brief that outlines the context in which tuition usually increases, highlights recent trends in tuition prices, and identifies policy options states have considered to remedy this issue.
- In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly passed HB 1030, in which [§ 116-143.9](#) ensures that North Carolina residents will pay the same rate for tuition for eight consecutive semesters at the University of North Carolina System institutions, making cost of attendance much more predictable for students. Moreover, transfer students receive the same benefit with a prorated amount of semesters dependent upon how many credits they enroll with at the institution. Students who stop out for military service, medical difficulty, or disability are eligible for a waiver.
- In 2012, the Education Commission of the States produced [a report](#) outlining the governing bodies that control tuition pricing. The report shows that as of 2012, Florida and Louisiana are the only states in which tuition is set solely by the state legislature, and that this responsibility falls to multiple entities in several states.
- The 2017 State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) [report](#), “Aligning Tuition Policies with Strategies for Affordability,” seeks to convey how tuition-setting policy impacts college affordability. The report highlights the results of a survey in which 54 agencies in 49 states participated. Additionally, SHEEO outlines the primary factors in tuition pricing, discusses means by which states are already stimulating affordability by improving tuition-setting policy, and provides recommendations for states to improve on this front.



Consider an incentive system for institutions that rewards student success, i.e., a system that uses transparent performance data to encourage positive student outcomes and is crafted in a manner that does not discourage enrollment of students facing the greatest challenges to achieving postsecondary success.

- In July 2015, the National Conference of State Legislatures produced a [report](#) demonstrating the growing popularity of performance-based funding (PBF). At that time, 32 states had a funding strategy that rewarded enrollment, but also metrics like retention and completion. Moreover, several states include elements in their funding formula such as total number of low-income or minority graduates.
- In July 2011, the Mississippi state legislature signed into law [HB 875](#). It allocated 10 percent of PBF dollars to institutions based on how well they were graduating Pell Grant recipients, adult students, and students with low ACT scores, thereby incentivizing institutions to enroll students who meet these criteria. This [model summary](#) depicts the context in which Mississippi remodeled its higher education funding strategy and delivers a thorough breakdown of the current formula.
- In February 2017, Research for Action released the [preliminary results](#) of a two-year comparative, mixed-methods study that analyzed the effectiveness of PBF in Indiana, Tennessee, and Ohio. Findings show a positive impact for full-time students. Moreover, completion rates for Pell Grant recipients were positively impacted in Tennessee under the PBF model.

Preparation

NCAN's stance: Beyond financing higher education, states and statewide higher education systems should provide opportunities for all students to prepare for and succeed in higher education, particularly those who are traditionally underserved. This includes breaking down barriers within the system and building up students through equitable opportunity. Students do not enter higher education from a vacuum; they need support and opportunities. States should: (1) ensure all students have access to rigorous, credit-bearing coursework (dual/concurrent enrollment, AP, or IB) in high school; (2) provide free PSAT/SAT/ACT during the school day to all students; (3) provide school counselors with relevant, ongoing professional development in college and career readiness.

Ensure all students have access to rigorous, credit-bearing coursework (dual/concurrent enrollment, AP, or IB) in high school.

Students who enroll in higher education having had challenging coursework in high school are [more likely to succeed](#) in college than those who did not. Moreover, students entering postsecondary education with college credits therefore have fewer courses to complete in college, in turn lowering their overall cost of attendance. Thus, it is imperative that states put forth efforts to ensure that all of their students have equal access to dual/concurrent enrollment, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate courses in high school.

- A June 2013 [report](#) from The Education Trust portrays the current state of inequity in terms of access to AP and IB courses. Findings show that schools that do not offer these types of courses are often relatively small and in rural and impoverished areas, and that more than 1 million students attend a high school without an AP program. The report concludes with examples of effective initiatives launched by schools and districts as well as recommendations for state and federal policymakers.
- Fully updated in 2016, this [data point](#) from the Education Commission of the States highlights the efforts made in all 50 states and the District of Columbia concerning access to rigorous and college credit-bearing coursework. Examples include state appropriations for pilot programs, the creation of online portals for students whose high school does not offer these courses, and other initiatives devised



by state Departments of Education. In all, 37 states have taken aim at ensuring universal access to rigorous coursework for their students.

- In June 2014, the governor of Colorado signed into law [House Bill 14-1118](#), a measure that appropriates funding for the creation of the Advanced Placement Incentives Pilot Program for students in rural schools who participate in the National School Lunch Program. The program, which is housed within the Colorado Department of Education, designates state dollars for school-wide AP programs (including online programs if necessary), AP exam fees, and professional development for teachers to improve their AP instructional strategies.

Provide free PSAT/SAT/ACT exams during the school day to all students.

Taking college entrance exams without supplemental support requires one to independently travel to a test taking site on a non-school day and pay for the exam out-of-pocket. While both the [ACT](#) and [SAT](#) offer exam fee waivers for students who meet certain criteria, students have additional needs that should be met by states. Offering access to college entrance exams during school would lift a significant burden for traditionally underserved students.

- College Board sponsors [SAT School Day](#), the program that allows students to take the SAT cost-free during school. Primary participants in the program include states and school districts, which establish [individual contracts](#) with College Board. For SAT School Day, College Board also [covers the fees](#) for low-income students' first four score reports and college applications.
- A February 2018 [report](#) from the Brookings Institution contextualizes the need for universal access to college entrance exams, highlights several states in which the ACT or SAT is administered free of charge to students during school, and shares findings of studies that have analyzed the effectiveness of these efforts. In Michigan, for example, the percentage of high school students taking the ACT increased from 54 percent to 99 percent after this type of policy was implemented. It was particularly beneficial for low-income students; for every 1,000 low-income students who had performed well enough on the exam to attend a selective college in previous years, another 480 were uncovered as a result of universal access to the exam.
- An amendment to Section 17 of [Senate Bill 2150](#), a 2011 North Dakota measure, strengthens the requirements around college entrance exams. North Dakota had already covered the costs for 11th-graders to take the ACT during school, and this revision adds the writing portion of the exam to the sponsored expenses. Furthermore, school administrators are required to report the number of their students that took the ACT back to the state.

Provide school counselors with relevant, ongoing professional development in college and career readiness, e.g., integrate college and career readiness into graduate school counselor programs.

As of the 2014-2015 academic year, the national average student-to-school counselor [ratio](#) was a staggering 482:1, leaving school counselors with less than [20 percent](#) of their time to spend with their students to pursue postsecondary admission. This is further compounded by graduate programs that are largely inadequate; only [23 institutions](#) offer college counseling coursework, and only four of those institutions require it.

- Passed in November 2017, [House Bill 4181](#) requires the Michigan Department of Education to enforce stricter guidelines around school counselor certification. The law includes requirements that school counselors not have their credential renewed unless they have completed at least 25 hours of professional development, including instruction on the college preparation and selection process. Moreover, the law requires that a committee including college admissions professionals and financial aid officers approve the professional development standards.



- In 2012, College Board conducted a [survey](#) among 2,890 school counselors and 439 administrators on the current state of school counseling concerning efficacy, training, accountability, and resource alignment. Findings show wide agreement between the two groups that school counselors can and should lead the way in college and career readiness for high school students, and that there are current structural barriers preventing this from happening. The report concludes with examples of schools and districts that have utilized “proven and promising practices” to address these issues. Also embedded in the report are College Board’s [Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling](#).

Access

NCAN’s stance: Applying to college is a daunting process, but states can alleviate burden by providing students with the information they need. States should: (1) allow all high school graduates of that state to qualify for in-state tuition at public colleges; (2) build a statewide longitudinal data system that links postsecondary outcomes to K-12 education, including college-going and graduation rates by high school; (3) establish state application deadlines and processes that are sensitive to the needs of first-generation and low-income students; and (4) align high school graduation requirements with college acceptance requirements.

Allow all high school graduates of that state to qualify for in-state tuition at public colleges.

In 1982, the United States Supreme Court [struck down](#) a Texas law that denied undocumented students equal access to public, K-12 education. Unfortunately, in 1996, the legislative branch did not follow suit; that year, Congress passed the [Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act](#), which includes a provision that denies undocumented immigrants the right to in-state tuition rates (unless all U.S. citizens have that same access). Since these landmark decisions, several states have taken up the responsibility to meet the underlying economic and moral imperatives tied to this concept, while others have created additional barriers for these students.

- This July 2015 [brief](#) from the National Conference of State Legislatures highlights the efforts of states and university systems that have taken action on this front. In total, 16 states and four university systems have guaranteed in-state tuition rates to undocumented high school graduates since 2001. The report also identifies the five states that offer state financial aid to undocumented students, and the six states that bar undocumented students from paying in-state tuition rates.
- Recent shifts in immigration policy at the federal level have spurred state efforts on both sides of the debate. In July 2017, NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education released an analysis tracking this movement. In the [2017-2018 legislative session](#), 12 states had taken up 21 pieces of legislation in this space. The analysis also provides brief, historical context around in-state tuition and undocumented immigrants.
- Research from [The Review of Higher Education](#) (RHE) and the [IZA Institute of Labor Economics](#) (IZA) highlights the positive effects that this policy has on enrollment among undocumented students. Findings from the RHE and IZA reports show that undocumented Latinos are 1.54 times more likely to enroll in higher education if they are granted the in-state tuition rate, and that Hispanic, non-citizen youth were 3.6 percentage points more likely to enroll in college in states with this policy in place.

Build a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) that links postsecondary outcomes to K-12 education, including college-going and graduation rates by high school (e.g., consider using the National Student Clearinghouse to report on all students, not just those attending in-state institutions).



Statewide longitudinal data systems have the potential to provide state policymakers with a complete understanding of the student pipeline in their state. Common components of a statewide system include early education, K-12, postsecondary education, and workforce outcomes. The most efficient SLDSs are nimble enough to link across systems and offer a comprehensive overview for stakeholders to analyze.

- As a result of the Educational Technical Assistance Act, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) began awarding three- to five-year [grants](#) of up to \$20 million to assist states with SLDS development. All but three states have received funding since the first grant round in fiscal year 2006, and each state's application and outcomes are [publically available](#) on the Department's website. ED also offers monthly webinars and other [resources](#) to highlight SLDS best practices.
- The Education Commission of the States (ECS) developed a [dataset](#) that outlines the format of each SLDS in the country, and individual profiles take a closer look at the design of each system. Moreover, ECS released a [brief](#) on SLDS legislation introduced in 2016 and 2017, a snapshot of SLDSs in a [national context](#), and an exhaustive [history](#) of SLDS legislation introduced since 1996.
- In 2006, the Data Quality Campaign released a [report](#) that includes a section on the "Ten Essential Elements" of an SLDS. The report emphasizes "the ability to match student records between P-12 and postsecondary systems," and highlights the critical ability to access data points such as the percentage of graduates who scored proficiently on state exams but still needed remedial courses in college. Such information is invaluable information for educators and policymakers.

Establish state application deadlines and processes that are sensitive to the needs of first-generation and low-income students.

Deadlines and processes that are flexible and uniform are most navigable for students whose parents did not graduate from college and for those from a low-income background. While some states do not require the completion of forms besides the FAFSA, others have their own aid applications with separate deadlines. State efforts to streamline these processes can simplify the college-going process for traditionally underserved students.

- In collaboration with colleges and universities in the state, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) created [ApplyTexas](#), a centralized portal for postsecondary applications. ApplyTexas lets students apply for admission to any public institution as well as participating private institutions in the state simultaneously. Moreover, students can apply for campus-based scholarships and upload college essays.
- The need-based aid program in [Ohio](#), the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG), features both a flexible application deadline and a streamlined process. The annual deadline is Oct. 1, and students become eligible for the [aid](#) upon completion of the FAFSA.
- In June 2011, the Texas state legislature signed into law [Senate Bill 851](#), which created a uniform priority deadline for financial aid. While the bill language gives priority to those who meet the deadline, meeting the deadline does not determine eligibility. The bill also requires the THECB to consult with financial aid administrators before setting the deadline.

Align high school graduation requirements with college acceptance requirements.

As of 2010, [more than half](#) of state high school graduation requirements were less rigorous than the admissions requirements of the respective state's flagship institution. This disconnect has the potential to exclude otherwise qualified and college-ready and students from quality, affordable higher education options.



- In October 2014, ECS produced the [Blueprint for College Readiness](#), which describes the issue of high school graduation and postsecondary admission alignment, provides examples of state policies that have proven effective, and offers policy recommendations for states that have room to improve. ECS cites the lack of a world languages high school coursework requirement as a prominent discrepancy between high school graduation and postsecondary admission requirements, and finds that just six states have directly aligned graduation and admission requirements as of 2014.
- Beginning in 2008, Colorado launched a series of [P-20 initiatives](#) in an effort to ensure the state's student pipeline was well-prepared for college and the workforce. The K-12/higher education alignment component of this initiative is known as [Core-to-College](#). The regulations for this initiative, which are housed at the Colorado Department of Education, are enforced by [Senate Bill 08-212](#).
- In 2010, the Washington Student Achievement Council and the State Board of Education established the [College Academic Distribution Requirements](#). While each school district must identify which [courses](#) meet these standards, the standards outline the minimum requirements for high school graduates to gain admission into public postsecondary institutions in Washington.

Success

NCAN's stance: States should support students to and through the higher education experience. States should: (1) provide multiple pathways to success including two- and four-year degrees, certificates, and apprenticeships; and (2) create and then manage a clear and accessible public database of transfer pathways among public institutions.

Provide multiple pathways to success including two- and four-year degrees, certificates, and apprenticeships.

States should invest in all forms of higher education that lead to upward mobility. Investments in short-term programs should be geared toward modern industries that provide clear opportunity for students to progress socioeconomically. Ultimately, states should bolster two-year, four-year, and certificate programs that lead to well-paying jobs for students.

- Chapter eight of a [2010 report](#) from the California Department of Education to the state's legislature and governor highlights the means by which California is providing high school students with multiple pathways to higher education. The report cites applicable research, identifies efforts already underway on this front, and acknowledges the challenges California faced in these undertakings.
- In May 2016, Iowa put forth a comprehensive effort to restructure its public investment in short-term postsecondary options. [House File 2392](#) revised standards to achieve a more modern career and technical education (CTE) curriculum, invested in a new planning partnership program between K-12 and two-year schools, and updated the Board for Career and Technical Education to reflect these new items.
- In January 2015, the [New York Board of Regents](#) approved [regulations](#) expanding the variety of coursework that counts as credits for graduation. High school students in New York must pass Regents Exams to graduate, and under new regulations that allow for multiple pathways, students can choose from a variety of work-based learning programs to study and later be tested on, such as foreign languages, a form of CTE, and the arts. Rigorous coursework and exams in these areas allow students to study an area of interest to them, prepare for a specific and sought-out postsecondary option, and begin their higher education experience having already obtained college credits or a certificate.



Create and then manage a clear and accessible public database of transfer pathways among public institutions (e.g., establish pathway programs to guide students from two-year colleges through to four-year degrees).

It is crucial for policymakers to have a comprehensive understanding of student pathways, particularly concerning transfer students, in order to identify where and why students do not complete higher education. For students themselves, support such as that provided in a [guided pathways model](#) can be extremely helpful in devising a completion plan with actionable goals and checkpoints along the way.

- In May 2014, the Education Commission of the States [profiled](#) each state's transfer and articulation policies, identifying individual state resources and statutes that ease the transfer process for students.
 - The Alabama Commission on Higher Education developed a [web portal](#) that provides relevant information for transferring and articulation, identifies courses that transfer universally across Alabama, and more.
- In June 2015, Columbia University's Community College Resource Center (CCRC) began developing a "[practitioner packet](#)" around the concept of guided pathways. This resource provides an elaborate illustration of this reform model and the data to support it, a case study of a campus that adopted the model, and recommendations for the adoption process on a new campus.
- Announced in December 2016, the [California Guided Pathways Project](#) is a program in which 20 community colleges were competitively selected to receive funding to implement a guided pathways program on their campus. With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, College Futures Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, and The Teagle Foundation, each campus is currently developing program maps for their students in an effort to increase completion and persistence rates on campus. Programs are set to be fully in place by 2019.