



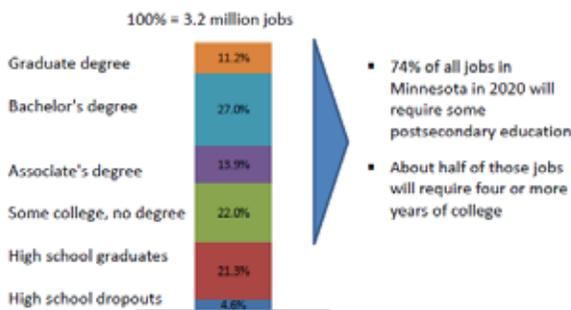
## Increasing Pathways to Postsecondary Education

*Aligning systems through partnerships for student success*

### Setting the context

By the year 2020, fully 74% of all the jobs in Minnesota will require some postsecondary education (Carnevale, et. al., 2013). Half of these jobs will require a bachelor's degree or beyond; half will require a certificate, diploma or associate's degree (figure 1).

**2020 Job Forecast by Education Required**  
Percent



SOURCE: The Georgetown University Center on the Workforce, 2013.

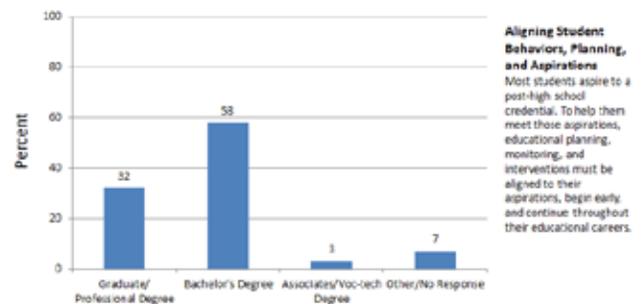
The well-paying jobs in Minnesota – the jobs needed to sustain families and lift people out of poverty – will all require some postsecondary education. Without a well-educated workforce, Minnesota will not be able to compete globally, threatening the economic vitality of communities across our state.

To meet this challenge, we must ensure that every high school student is prepared for postsecondary education and has developed a career plan.

To meet the need for a substantially better educated workforce, we must think in new ways about how more students can make the transition from secondary to postsecondary education and do so in ways that are easier, meet the needs of individual learners, and are cost-effective.

We must better align student aspirations and educational choices with labor market needs. Student aspirations (figure 2) are not always in sync with the kind of education needed for graduates to be prepared for the jobs of the future (figure 1).

**Other College and Career Readiness Factors**  
Percent of 2012 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations



SOURCE: College & Career Readiness in Minnesota

Over the next thirty years, Minnesota will continue to grow increasingly diverse. Sixty percent of all the population growth in the state of Minnesota and *all* of the population growth in the Twin Cities metropolitan area will occur among people of color and other underrepresented populations – populations that have traditionally been underserved by higher education. We must ensure that all Minnesotans – regardless of personal background or financial means – have an opportunity to go on to postsecondary education to prepare themselves for the jobs of the future.

To meet Minnesota's growing need for a well-educated workforce, we must work together in new ways. We must redesign our educational systems to collaborate and forge partnerships that better maximize the available resources and expertise in ways that better serve students and communities across our state. We must ensure that more students are better prepared for postsecondary education and pursue academic programs that align with their

interests and prepare them of high demand, high growth well-paying jobs. We must work together in ways that reduce the cost of postsecondary credentials and degrees.

## Strategies to Improve Pathways to Postsecondary Education

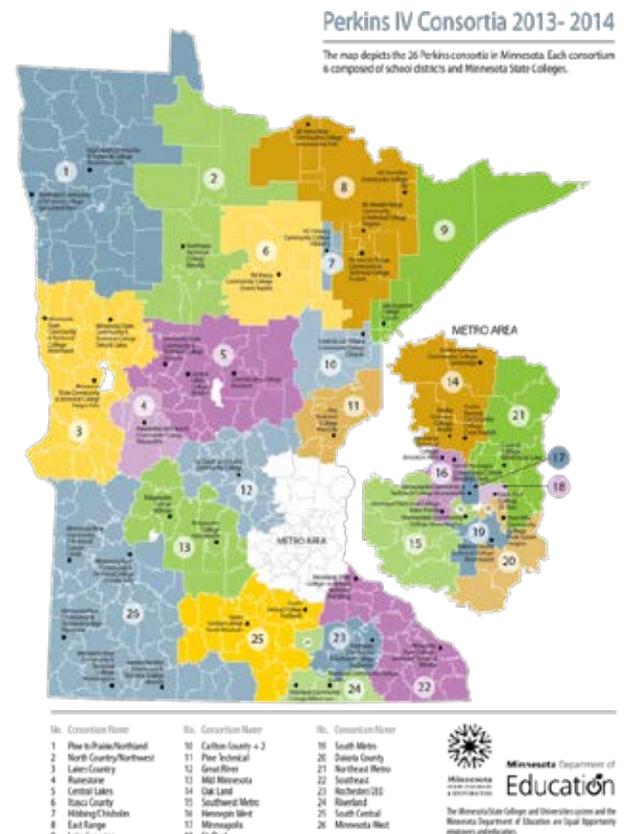
### 1. Expand Early College Credit

Dual enrollment opportunities, where high school students are able to simultaneously earn secondary and postsecondary credits, enable students to accelerate their learning and earn postsecondary credit at a substantial savings for students and their families. Students who access dual enrollment opportunities are more likely to go on to enroll in postsecondary education full time, are less likely to need developmental courses, and are more likely to complete degrees than their counterparts who do not participate in a dual enrollment program (Oregon, 2010; Speroni, 2011).

As an earlier adopter of dual enrollment options, since 1985 dual enrollment opportunities for high school students in Minnesota come in a number of different forms. Eligible Minnesota high school students across the state can take college courses taught by college or university faculty members on higher-ed campuses or at their high schools through a face-to-face course or a blended course, or an online course. In addition, students can also access college-level courses taught by highly qualified and credentialed high school instructors who are mentored by college faculty, commonly known as concurrent enrollment. In both cases, these college courses are tuition-free to students.

Students can also access rigorous courses in their high school by enrolling in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and earn early college credit by demonstrating mastery of competencies on national exams. Students can also access rigorous technical courses, aligned to industry standards, through Minnesota's career and technical education Programs of Study. Under the state's unique consortium arrangement, all Minnesota high

schools have established relationships with regional community/technical colleges to align technical courses and provide early opportunities for students to gain college credit in technical courses while in high school.



Rigorous course waivers streamline the process for students accessing these opportunities to obtain their high school diploma. In order to adhere to the statutory requirement for the student's comprehensive education in all of the academic content standards while also providing flexibility and access to these rigorous options available to students, local school boards can determine that students participating in these programs meet or exceed the requirements of state academic standards related to a particular course of study. A student participating in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program may also request a waiver of the academic standards requirements as outlined in [Minnesota Statute 120B.021](#).

Over the past few years, local Minnesota school districts across the state have partnered with their local colleges and universities to expand access for high school students to earn early college credit, customized to the needs of their students and their communities. Examples of local partnerships include: The Applied Learning Institute in the Iron Range, the Bridges Academy and College in the Schools in the Brainerd/Staples area, Online College in the High School, Senior to Sophomore through St. Cloud State University, the PACE program at Century College, College Now through Southwest Minnesota State University, Anoka-Hennepin STEP (Secondary Technical Education Program) and the Irondale-Anoka Ramsey Collaboration to name a few.

Early college programs must adhere to the accreditation standards set by the Higher Learning Commission as well as the standards set by the National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Programs and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. These standards require, for example, that high school teachers who teach college-level courses meet the same educational requirements of college instructors teaching the same course. The Higher Learning Commission also mandates that 15 of the 60 credits for the associate's degree and 1/3 of the credits of a diploma or certificate to be earned at the institution awarding the degree.

To help support the creation of partnerships between Minnesota school districts and their local colleges and universities to increase pathways to postsecondary education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the Minnesota Department of Education will co-host five regional Pathways to Postsecondary Regional Summits in December 2013:

**December 2-** Lake Superior College - Duluth

**December 10-** Minnesota State Community and Technical College - Fergus Falls

**December 11-** Central Lakes College - Brainerd

**December 16-** Rochester Community and Technical College - Rochester

**December 17-** North Hennepin Community College - Brooklyn Park

## 2. Align Assessment

New legislation has gone into effect this year to better align secondary and postsecondary education student assessments to promote a better understanding of college and career readiness. Beginning in grade 8 all public school students will be required to take a career interest inventory assessment as well as an assessment that is predictive of how the student will score on a nationally normed college entrance exam. Students will also be required to take a 10<sup>th</sup> grade assessment that is predictive of how they will perform on a nationally normed college entrance exam. In grade 11, all students will be required to take a nationally normed college entrance exam.

This new assessment strategy will better identify students who are ready for college-level work while they are in high school and enable better advice to students about their available postsecondary options. It will also earlier identify students who may need targeted interventions in foundational skills while they are still in high school.

Students who are not predicted to reach the college readiness benchmarks as identified by the nationally normed exam in grade 10 or 11 will be required to take the college placement diagnostic tool used by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to identify the specific areas where the student needs additional academic support to be ready for postsecondary work.

This student assessment information can be used to help districts customize just in time support for students in foundational skills aligned to meeting Minnesota State Colleges and Universities college and career readiness requirements.

## 3. Deploy Targeted Interventions to Improve College Readiness

According to the 2010 *Get Prepared Report*, 40% of recent Minnesota high school graduates who enroll in a public college or university in Minnesota require

developmental education courses in reading, and/or writing, and/or most often in math.

Developmental courses are often prerequisite courses that must be taken before a student can enroll in credit-bearing college courses. The need for developmental courses often lengthens the time towards degree completion and increases the cost of the degree. Through new legislation, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the Minnesota Department of Education, and local school districts are charged to work together to identify a series of targeted interventions that will take place in high school to achieve college readiness benchmarks and waive further testing when a student enrolls at a Minnesota State College or University.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities are currently convening faculty led committees in reading, English, math and ESOL to create shared learner outcomes, improve transferability of courses, and to design a series of target interventions accepted system wide to enable waiver of further testing once material has been mastered. Their recommendations will be forwarded to the Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs in April of 2014.

#### **4. Create a Postsecondary/ Career Plan for Every Student**

New legislation beginning in 2013- 2014 requires local school districts to assist students to explore college and career interests and to develop a postsecondary/career plan no later than 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

These plans will include information on college credit opportunities both during and after high school, strategies for financing postsecondary education, and work-based learning opportunities. Students will update their plans over time as their aspirations and interests change.

The Career Pathways and Technical Education Advisory Taskforce has been formed to guide the Legislature on policy changes that will improve alignment between secondary and postsecondary education programs and workforce needs. Issues such as career planning, curricular alignment, credit

transfer, credentialing and civic engagement will be discussed. A report of their recommendations is due to the Legislature in February of 2014.

#### **Next steps**

Over the course of the next year and beyond, school districts across the State of Minnesota will be partnering with their local colleges and universities to design their community's approach to improving the pathways to postsecondary education. As our state longitudinal data system continues to evolve, additional research will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the alternative designs to ensure continuous improvement in our strategies to increase college and career readiness of our students and their persistence to completion in postsecondary education.

These next years are pivotal in helping to shape the redesign efforts. We encourage your partnership to pioneer your community's innovative model to better serve students and communities across Minnesota.