



## **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 in the toolkit 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.

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## **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.
3. Use early awareness strategies to set expectations and provide financial resources.

### **Establish a minimum threshold for need-based aid and do not dip below it.**

- The National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs conducts an [annual survey](#) and produces a [report](#) that provides a clear picture of how states prioritize need-based aid in comparison to other types of aid.
- The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) produces the State Higher Education Finance report, commonly referred to as the [SHEF report](#). This annual analysis gives readers the earliest possible review of state and local support, tuition revenue, and enrollment trends for the [most recently completed fiscal year](#). SHEEO supplements the report with [interactive data tools](#) that provide stakeholders a more detailed understanding of these national and state trends.
  - *Member Advocacy Feature:* This April 2017 [policy brief](#) from College Success Arizona outlines the economic benefit of supporting low-income students, contextualizes the moment Arizona is in with regards to deep spending cuts and the suspension of aid programs, and offers policy recommendations for increasing postsecondary access and completion by prioritizing need-based aid.
- The Education Commission of the States offers several resources pertaining to need-based aid.
  - This August 2018 [report](#) offers guiding principles in designing financial aid programs, depicts the current state of play at the national level, and identifies common flaws in state aid design.
  - This 50-state, interactive [database](#) gives a comprehensive look at the 100 largest state-funded financial aid programs across the country.
  - This May 2017 [policy snapshot](#) gives readers an understanding of the five-year change in need-based aid funding levels for each state and shows which states considered changes to their need-based aid program(s) in 2017.

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

- The Iowa Department of Education houses the Pathways for Academic Career and Employment ([PACE](#)) program, which provides funding for eligible Iowans to pursue in-demand careers and offers academic and employment training to help Iowans secure gainful, in-state employment in fields including information technology, health care,



advanced manufacturing, and transportation and logistics.

- In April 2015, the governor of Rhode Island announced the [Real Jobs Rhode Island](#) initiative. Its goal is to connect employers with prospective employees who have skills the employer needs, and vice versa. A November 2017 [report](#) demonstrates the initiative's impact in its first 18 months.
- This October 2018 report from the [Education Commission of the States](#) highlights state legislative efforts to align education and the workforce. The report also demonstrates how different political climates influenced states' approaches to accomplishing this goal through interviews with state leaders from Connecticut, Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas.

**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 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 if the student's family is below the household income cap, and if the student meets [other requirements](#). The program starts as early as 7th grade, thereby qualifying as both an early awareness campaign and 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 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.

#### **Awareness Campaigns:**

- Founded in 1988 in Columbus, OH, I Know I Can (IKIC) provides students in grades 6 through 8 and their families in all Columbus City Schools with access to [college preparation programs](#). Students remain enrolled in IKIC throughout their time in higher education, and are also eligible for grants and scholarships. Services include mentoring, financial assistance, and one-on-one advising.

#### **Savings Accounts:**

- This May 2017 [report](#) from the Institute for Higher Education Policy cites research that shows children who have between \$1-\$499 in college savings are three times more likely than their peers without a savings account to enroll and four times more likely to complete higher education.
- This April 2018 blog post from the [Education Commission of the States](#) includes a database of 529 plans currently in place and explains how the 2017 federal tax reform affects states' 529 programs.



## **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 implement 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.
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.**

- Data from Lumina Foundation and the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce (Georgetown CEW) depict the clear need to increase the postsecondary attainment level in the U.S. According to Lumina, the average attainment rate for education beyond high school is just [46.9 percent](#), while an estimated 65 percent of job vacancies will require education beyond high school by 2020, according to the [Georgetown CEW](#).
- This October 2017 [policy snapshot](#) from the Education Commission of the States features each attainment goal 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 May 2017, the governor of Oregon signed into law [House Bill 2311](#). The bill amended the state's previous attainment goal to include nontraditional students and align the goal with Oregon's workforce needs.
- This [Lumina Foundation](#) brief provides a definition for a strong attainment goal, outlines the means by which attainment goals can be set by state leaders, and highlights the process by which Arizona and New Hampshire implemented strong attainment goals in a case study format.
  - *Member Advocacy Feature:* The Florida College Access Network developed district [attainment profiles](#) to provide state legislators with a clear picture of the attainment level of their district and how it compares to the state's overall rate. Moreover, the profiles quantify the progress that must be made for Florida to achieve the state Higher Education Coordinating Council's goal to have 55



percent of Floridians ages 25 to 64 hold a degree or postsecondary certificate by 2025.

**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).**

**Public-private partnerships:**

- This July 2017 [toolkit](#) from the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution outlines how community colleges should seek out partnerships, identifies key characteristics for these partnerships, and lists practical steps for linking education with industry.

**Student Supports:**

- In September 2016, the California Legislature established the [California College Promise Innovation Grant Program](#). This program allowed the California Community College Chancellor to select [community college districts](#) to receive grant funding for providing a range of support – including financial aid – to students throughout their higher education journey.
- In July 2018, the North Carolina General Assembly adopted [HR 1102](#), which commissioned a study to identify opportunities to put public dollars toward supporting the state’s low-income, high-achieving students to and through higher education.

**Bridge Programs:**

- A September 2014 [Center for American Progress](#) (CAP) report highlights practices of three public universities that are serving traditionally underserved students exceptionally well. Included in the report is the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s [summer bridge program](#), whose participants are retained and complete their degree at higher rates than 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.**

**Student-friendly financial aid deadlines and procedures:**

- In April 2016, via [House Bill 7019](#), the Florida Legislature required the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education to study the impact that federal, state, and institutional financial aid policies have on college affordability.
- The office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) at the U.S. Department of Education has a [webpage](#) that identifies the requirements and deadlines for students to apply for aid in each state.

**Adult attainment:**

- In November 2010, the Pennsylvania 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.



- This October 2013 report from the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) depicts the results of [Project Win-Win](#), an effort to locate and contact individuals who were within striking distance of completing an associate's degree and encouraging them to re-enroll. The report provides recommendations for organizations that wish to pursue a similar effort.

**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.**

- This March 2016 [brief](#) from the National Conference of State Legislatures outlines the context in which tuition usually increases, highlights recent trends in tuition prices, and identifies policy options states have considered to remedy consistent tuition increases.
- In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly passed House Bill 1030, in which [§ 116-143.9](#) ensures that North Carolina residents will pay the same tuition rate for eight consecutive semesters at University of North Carolina System institutions. This makes cost of attendance more predictable for students.
- This 2012 [report](#) from the Education Commission of the States outlines 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. In several states, this responsibility falls to multiple entities.
- This 2017 State Higher Education Executive Officers Association [report](#), "Aligning Tuition Policies with Strategies for Affordability," conveys how tuition-setting policy impacts college affordability and highlights the results of a survey in which 54 agencies in 49 states participated.

**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 an [interactive tool](#) that allows stakeholders to review the higher education funding formulas in all 50 states.
- In July 2011, the Mississippi Legislature signed into law [House Bill 875](#). It allocated 10 percent of funding based on how well a college or university was Pell Grant recipients, adult students, and students with low ACT scores. This [model summary](#) depicts the context in which Mississippi remodeled its higher education funding strategy and delivers a thorough breakdown of the current formula.
- This 2015 [issue paper](#) from Lumina Foundation lays out the modern history of higher education funding models, contextualizes the rise in popularity of outcomes-based



funding, and offers guiding principles for implementing new formulas and measuring their impact.

- This October 2018 report from [Third Way](#) summarizes the theory behind outcomes-based funding, exhibits the research conducted on this issue, and provides recommendations for policymakers aiming to implement outcomes-based funding policies that enhance access and equity.
- Approved in June 2018, California's [2018-19 budget](#) includes an outcomes-based funding formula for the state's 114 community colleges. Twenty percent of funds for the two-year institutions will depend on performance metrics such as completion, while another 20 percent of funding will depend on the rate at which the institutions enroll low-income students.
  - *Member Advocacy Feature:* While the negotiations for the state's budget were ongoing, the Southern California College Access Network signed on to a [letter](#) urging the co-chairs on the budget committee to shift to an outcomes-based formula for California's community colleges.



## **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 exams 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.**

- 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 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 to expand access to AP and IB courses as well as recommendations for state and federal policymakers.
- Fully updated in 2016, [this 50-state comparison](#) from the Education Commission of the States highlights the efforts made to expand access to rigorous, college credit-bearing coursework. In all, 37 states have taken steps to ensure 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 schoolwide AP programs (including online programs if necessary), AP exam fees, and professional development for teachers to improve their AP instructional strategies.
- This 2018 [brief](#) from Education Commission of the States cites research that depicts the positive postsecondary outcomes associated with being dually enrolled, and proposes policy fixes for increasing access to dual enrollment courses for students who have not traditionally taken these courses.

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

- [ACT](#) and [SAT](#) exam fee waivers are available for students who meet certain criteria. Moreover, states and school districts can establish individual contracts with College



Board to participate in the [SAT School Day program](#), which gives students the opportunity to take the exam during the week in their own school, free of charge.

- This 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.
- An amendment to Section 17 of [Senate Bill 2150](#), a 2011 North Dakota measure, increases the appropriations for college entrance exams. North Dakota had already covered the costs for 11<sup>th</sup>-graders to take the ACT during school, and this revision adds the writing portion of the exam to the sponsored expenses.

**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).**

- This [joint report](#) from the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) shows that the national average student-to-school counselor ratio was a staggering 482:1 in 2014-15, which is far from the groups' suggested ratio of 250:1. This has led to counselors spending less than [20 percent](#) of their time advising their students on postsecondary access.
- Findings from this 2012 [NACAC report](#) show that only 23 colleges and universities offer graduate coursework on postsecondary access advising, and only four of those institutions require such courses to graduate.
- This 2012 College Board [survey](#) of 2,890 school counselors and 439 administrators depicts the current state of school counseling, showing 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 currently are structural barriers preventing this from happening.
- In November 2017, [House Bill 4181](#) was signed into law, thereby requiring 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 on the college preparation and selection process.
  - *Member Advocacy Feature:* Sarah Anthony, former deputy director for partnerships and advocacy at the Michigan College Access Network, [testified](#) before the Michigan House Workforce and Talent Development Committee in March of 2017 in support of the bill.



## **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.
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.**

- This July 2015 [brief](#) from the National Conference of State Legislatures highlights the efforts of states and university systems that have taken action to provide in-state tuition rates to all high school graduates, regardless of immigration status. The report also identifies the states that offer state financial aid to undocumented students as well as those that bar undocumented students from paying in-state tuition rates.
- This July 2017 [analysis](#) from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators summarizes 2017-18 legislative action on this issue and provides brief historical context around in-state tuition for undocumented students.
- Washington State's [Senate Bill 1563](#) grants in-state tuition rates as well as state aid eligibility to students who are not citizens or lawful residents if they have, among other requirements, completed their secondary education in Washington State.

### **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).**

- 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. ED also offers monthly webinars and other [resources](#) to highlight SLDS best practices, and publishes [grantee outcomes](#) on its website.
- The Education Commission of the States (ECS) developed a [dataset](#) that outlines the makeup of each SLDS in the country as well as individual profiles that take a closer look at the design of each system.
  - This August 2017 ECS [brief](#) highlights SLDS legislation introduced in 2016 and 2017.



- This May 2018 [blog](#) from the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) highlights 2017 legislation aimed at leveraging data to improve student outcomes, including California’s [Senate Bill 1224](#), which would establish an SLDS.
  - This 2006 DQC [report](#) includes a section on the “10 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.

### **Establish state application deadlines and processes that are sensitive to the needs of first-generation and low-income 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.
- In June 2011, the Texas 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.

### **Align high school graduation requirements with college acceptance requirements.**

- This April 2018 [report](#) from the Center for American Progress shows that the requirements necessary to achieve a diploma are aligned with admission standards for public institutions in just four states. Included in the report is a state-by-state analysis that illustrates the academic subjects in which there is secondary completion and postsecondary admission alignment.
- This October 2014 [report](#) from the Education Commission of the States defines the issue of high school graduation and postsecondary admission alignment, provides examples of state policies that have proven to be effective, and offers policy recommendations for states that have room to improve.



## **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.
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.**

- Chapter 8 of a [2010 report](#) from the California Department of Education highlights the means by which California is providing high school students with multiple pathways to higher education. The report cites relevant research, identifies other efforts already underway on this front, and acknowledges the challenges California faced in this undertaking.
- In May 2016, via [House File 2392](#), Iowa put forth a comprehensive effort to restructure its public investment in short-term postsecondary options. The [law](#) also calls for modern career and technical education (CTE) curriculum, a new partnership program between K-12 and two-year schools, and an updated the Board for Career and Technical Education to reflect these new items.
  - *Member Advocacy Feature:* This April 2018 [policy brief](#) from College Success Arizona depicts the critical role associate degree completion will play for the state to meet its attainment goal, highlights data that show how earning these credentials benefits students and the economy, and makes policy recommendations for fostering a more comprehensive college-going culture.

### **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).**

- This [50-state comparison](#) from Education Commission of the States profiles each state's transfer and articulation policies, identifying 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 students seeking to transfer and identifies courses that transfer universally across Alabama.
- In April 2018, the University of California (UC) and the California Community College System established a [memorandum of understanding](#) aimed at enhancing students' ability to transfer from the state's two-year institutions to one of the system's nine universities. Once eligibility requirements are finalized, qualifying community college



students who complete a UC pathway will be guaranteed admission to a UC institution.

- This 2017 [policy snapshot](#) from Education Commission of the States provides an overview of legislation considered in 2016 and 2017 on the issue of guided pathways.
  - *Member Advocacy Feature:* This [April 2018 report](#) from the Florida College Access Network provides a brief history of the state's 2+2 articulation agreement, summarizes the key elements that make the agreement effective, and offers policy recommendations for improving the program.