

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **WHAT METHODOLOGY CHANGES WERE MADE IN NOVEMBER 2018 AND WHAT WAS THE REASONING BEHIND THEM?**

Switched to grouping students based on the year they graduated from high school – In a change from past years, the Postsecondary Readiness Reports (PRR) now reports students by high school graduating class. These are the students who earned a high school diploma in a given year. In the past, the PRR grouped students in cohorts based on the year they entered ninth grade. This change was requested by the high schools and is more intuitive to understand.

Added ability to filter by high school graduation on-time status – All reports now have the ability to filter outcomes by whether or not the student graduated high school “on-time” (within four years). This is a feature that was commonly requested by users. All reports default to showing outcomes for all graduates.

Added first fall enrollment and remedial course data – In order to provide data on more recent high school graduating classes, enrollment and remedial course data for only the fall immediately following high school graduation (rather than the full first year following high school graduation) were added to the [Enrollment Trends](#) and [Remedial Course Trends](#) reports.

### **WERE THE NOVEMBER 2018 METHODOLOGY CHANGES APPLIED RETROACTIVELY?**

Yes, all of the data currently accessible in the reports reflects all of the methodology changes applied in December 2018.

### **WHAT IS "COLLEGE READINESS?"**

According to the Educational Policy Improvement Center, a student who is college or career ready can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing postsecondary courses without the need for remedial or developmental coursework.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSTSECONDARY READINESS REPORTS?**

The reports are significant not only because they provide a statewide portrait of how prepared Iowa high school graduates are for success in postsecondary education and community college based training, they also provide local results to help guide improvement efforts in schools and school districts.

### **HOW CAN THE POSTSECONDARY READINESS REPORTS BE USED?**

Schools can use their local information, in combination with regional and statewide comparisons, to benchmark progress toward locally-defined goals as they relate to postsecondary readiness. As a statewide responsibility to ensure Iowa students are ready for life after high school, these reports are being provided publicly to assist school officials in collaboration with parents and the general public to meet these goals.

### **HOW IS THE INFORMATION DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COLLEGE READINESS BENCHMARKS?**

There are multiple indicators of college readiness available to states, districts, and schools. Many of these measures, such as ACT's college readiness benchmarks and the college readiness measure included in the Iowa School Report Card, attempt to predict the likelihood that a student is college-ready. The Postsecondary Readiness Reports differ in that they represent the first statewide measure on how students actually performed, not how likely they were to perform at a certain level in college.

### **WHEN ARE THE POSTSECONDARY READINESS REPORTS UPDATED?**

The reports will be updated annually each spring.

## **WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE DATA IN THE POSTSECONDARY READINESS REPORTS?**

The Iowa Department of Education provides a list of public high school graduates. Iowa community colleges and the three public universities provide the enrollment, remedial/ developmental course enrollment, and completion/award data for their institutions. For students attending private and/or out-of-state postsecondary institutions, National Student Clearinghouse enrollment and award data are utilized. The National Student Clearinghouse is a nonprofit and nongovernmental organization that provides nationwide coverage to postsecondary enrollment and degree records.

## **WHAT TYPES OF POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS ARE AND ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THESE REPORTS?**

Enrollment reports derive data from two- and four-year public and private institutions, as well as some other educational entities that report to the National Student Clearinghouse. Almost all postsecondary institutions report to the National Student Clearinghouse; those that do not are not included in the reports and tend to fall into one of the following categories: cosmetology schools, massage therapy schools, schools of chiropractic medicine, bible colleges and military academies.

Remedial/developmental course data are only available for Iowa public postsecondary two- and four-year institutions.

## **WHAT IS A REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL COURSE?**

Students who are not ready for college-level coursework are usually placed into remedial courses (called “developmental courses” at colleges and universities). The U.S. Department of Education defines remedial classes as those that fall below the 100 level, such as Math 50. The process for placing students into remedial classes varies by college. Many community colleges also use placement tests, but may or may not require students to take remediation. Remedial class credits do not count toward a degree and usually must be completed prior to attempting college-level coursework.

## **HOW ARE REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL COURSES DELIVERED?**

Most community college remedial courses are offered through the traditional face-to-face course format, but an increasing number of courses have been delivered via online instruction or are blended between face-to-face and web-based modes. Some of these courses are standards-based, while others are competency-based with offerings through a modularized curriculum. Several community colleges are implementing alternative methods of remediation such as supplemental instruction, lab components added to transfer courses, and/or accelerated delivery models including the paired co-requisite type where transfer courses and developmental courses are taken together. Since FY14, a significant decrease in total statewide developmental credits has been seen within the community college system in part due to these alternative delivery methods. Regent Universities also deliver most of their developmental courses through the traditional face-to-face format. The one exception is that the University of Iowa offers its Basic Algebra I course in both on-line and face-to-face formats.

## **DO THE REPORTS INDICATE WHICH SCHOOLS ARE BETTER AT PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE?**

The reports do not rate schools on college readiness. There are many factors outside of the school setting that influence the college readiness of students, and those are not reflected in these reports. The Postsecondary Readiness Report is one tool schools can use to help determine how well current measures gauge students’ college readiness. They can serve as a catalyst for those at the secondary and postsecondary levels to define what it takes to succeed in entry-level courses.

## **HOW ARE THE DATA FOR THE POSTSECONDARY READINESS REPORTS PROTECTED TO ENSURE PRIVACY IS MAINTAINED?**

The agencies involved in creating the reports have a signed data-sharing agreement, which limits the information shared and defines how these data can be used. To further ensure privacy is maintained, access to personally identifiable information is limited and reports are available only at the aggregate level. Lastly, when there are fewer than six students in a group, these data are suppressed. This and other steps are taken to prevent constructive identification of information in the report.