

The following are research-backed messages that higher education leaders can adapt and incorporate into your own materials. Key themes and talking points include:

1. **Too many high school graduates aren't ready for college or careers. We need to close the preparation gap so that *proficient in high school means truly prepared for college or work.***

Setting high expectations is the right thing to do.

High percentages of students arrive on our campuses needing remediation covering material they should have learned in high school. Similarly, many businesses say they cannot fill jobs because applicants do not have the right knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Our state's new standards and assessments are designed to help us address these gaps by measuring students' readiness for college and careers. By aiming higher, we can help spur needed improvements and ensure that more students are truly prepared for 21st century opportunities. This is an education issue, an economic issue, and a moral issue.

The expectations are set at the right level. Higher education was involved in developing the new standards and tests and in setting more meaningful achievement levels. These new K–12 expectations reflect *our* expectations as higher education leaders. Some parents may be surprised at this year's scores. This test is very different from previous tests. It does a better job of measuring what graduates should know and be able to do, such as think critically, analyze complex reading material, explain their math answers, and communicate effectively. Everyone now has a shared understanding about what it takes to be ready for college or careers, which in turn means that we can help more students arrive better prepared for success, which is good for everyone.

2. **These new standards and assessments will open doors for students and provide them with greater opportunities.**

Colleges will pay attention to these scores. Because these new assessments measure college-ready skills, colleges and universities will increasingly use these scores to determine whether incoming students are ready for credit-bearing courses or need to take non-credit developmental courses to close gaps in their academic preparation. By having these more meaningful data, colleges can make better decisions about our incoming students.

The new assessments will help us better support students. We are working closely with our K–12 colleagues to use these new assessment data to better prepare students before they start college. Students who do not score “college ready” should receive supports in their senior year so they can improve their skills before they graduate. Students who are ready for more challenging work should get it. We also are working on our own campuses to better prepare students to succeed once they enroll in college. *[Add specifics from your institution. “Best Practices in P–20*

Alignment” features case studies of some successful approaches at the K–12 and higher education levels.]

K–12 students deserve an honest and timely assessment of where they stand. Too many students who “did well” in high school and earned a diploma are surprised when they get to college and learn they have to take basic English and math courses over again. And parents have sticker shock when they learn they have to pay for college courses that do not lead to a degree. Having more accurate information earlier helps everyone. Colleges used to get readiness data only when freshmen got to campus in the fall and took placement tests. We now get information on their readiness in 11th grade and have an extra year to help students prepare. That helps students catch up before they get to college. And it helps us be more effective, so that we are helping more students earn their degrees on time.

3. We can do this.

Students can meet these higher expectations — and states like Kentucky prove it with increased college-ready rates over the past three years of higher standards.

Stay the course. Educators and students have been working very hard over the past three years to implement these new standards. Don't undermine their hard work. Policymakers and all of us need to stay committed.

Worth the investment. If students are ready when they get to campus, they will complete college more quickly without costly remediation. That will save students, families, and taxpayers money. And it will help local economies and communities by getting better-prepared students into the workforce faster. Everyone wins: students, educators, and society.