

Following are suggested communications activities to help higher education leaders show support for your state’s college- and career-ready standards and assessments, with a particular eye toward the score release in summer and fall 2015. Higher education’s voice is critical. The more you get involved, the more impact it will have on students in your state.

IN THIS SECTION

Suggested Activities

Sample Timeline for Activities

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Learn more about what already is happening in your state — what the state education agency (SEA) is planning and what business groups and other organizations/coalitions are doing.

- Partner with the state Business Roundtable or state or local Chamber of Commerce to participate in their initiatives. (National organizations will be encouraging state and local members to get involved and work with higher education.)
- Identify any other local coalitions and/or business groups in your state working on similar issues
- and determine whether to partner with them. If not, there is plenty you can do independently (see below).
- Discuss the SEA’s plans for assessment score rollout to identify how higher education can participate.

2. Publicly express support and raise awareness for your state’s efforts to set higher standards before and after the new K–12 assessment results are released.

Possible activities to make the case for WHY the state’s college- and career-ready standards and assessments are so critical *before* the scores are released:

- Pass a board resolution or policy statement recognizing the value of the new standards and assessments and indicating how you will use them to: (1) partner with K–12 to improve college readiness (high school bridge programs, etc.) and (2) strengthen your own programs (placement, remediation, counseling, etc.). [*See more about these initiatives in “Best Practices in P–20 Alignment.”*]
- Write op-eds. [*See samples in “Customizable Templates.”*]
- Incorporate these messages into presentations targeting key audiences (parents, K–12 educators, policymakers, and higher education leaders and faculty).
- Partner with business groups to issue joint statements, co-author op-eds, or hold joint events signaling joint support for high standards.

Possible activities to shift gears to focus more on explaining HOW you are providing support for students *when* the results of the new K–12 assessment results are released. [See *timeline of estimated release dates* in “About the New Tests.”]

- Partner with the SEA (provide quotes for its releases and other materials, participate in live events, etc.).
- Write op-eds. [See *samples* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Write a press release. [See *samples* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Conduct media interviews and editorial board meetings — both to promote the wisdom of assessments that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards and to profile your own steps to support students. [See *talking points* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Use social media to deliver messages (tweet, post on Facebook, etc.). [See *samples* in “Customizable Templates.”]
- Continue incorporating these messages into presentations targeting key audiences (parents, K–12 educators, policymakers, and higher education leaders and faculty).

3. Use this as an opportunity to launch and/or expand initiatives in your system/state designed to improve college readiness and success.

Possible commitments include:

- **Collaborate with K–12 school districts on precollege interventions** to help students earn college-ready distinction by the time they graduate high school.
 - States such as **Delaware, Maryland, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia** are actively promoting bridge courses to help high school students make the transition to college. [See “*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” to learn more.]
- **Revise postsecondary placement practices** to use the scores on the new assessments to put incoming college students into appropriate coursework and, consequently, on a path to persistence and completion.
 - **Hundreds of two- and four-year colleges** in several states have said they will use scores from the PARCC and Smarter Balanced tests to help place entering students in credit-bearing college courses, thus sending a signal to students and parents that these new standards and assessments matter. Institutions such as **California State University** also are working with K–12 systems to ensure that more students are prepared for such courses. [See “*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” to learn more.]
- **Redesign postsecondary course strategies** to ensure vertical content alignment between secondary and higher education systems and support student transition into credit-bearing coursework.
 - Higher education institutions in **multiple states** are using “co-requisite” remediation courses to accelerate students’ progress into credit-bearing courses. States such as **Tennessee and Ohio** are more broadly redesigning their course sequences and pathways to graduation. [See “*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” to learn more.]

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR ACTIVITIES

This sample timeline works backward from when your state is planning to release test results. [See *timeline of estimated release dates* in “About the New Tests.”]

Before Release of the Scores

2–3 months before scores released

- Reach out to your state education agency, business organization or coalition, and/or education advocacy group to see what they plan for releasing the new test scores.
- Hold initial strategy meetings with these organizations.
- Take stock of your university’s initiatives that support students — either on your own campuses or in partnership with K–12 systems. [“*Best Practices in P–20 Alignment*” has useful examples of such efforts.]
- Begin planning how you might expand these initiatives or develop similar ones.

1 month before scores released

- Finalize your campaign strategy and timeline with your state education agency and/or education advocacy group.
- If you are working on your own, make sure to at least confirm with the state education agency when it plans to release test scores.
- Pass a board resolution in support of the new standards and tests. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Draft and place initial op-eds, if appropriate. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Hold initial media briefings, focusing on how you are supporting students and when you will announce a new phase of supports, if appropriate. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Finalize plans for your student support systems (current and pending) and how you want to discuss them.

3 weeks before scores released

- Finalize key messages and basic talking points. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]
- Draft presentation(s) and a press release. [See “*Customizable Templates*” for a sample draft.]

2 weeks before scores released

- Finalize presentation(s) and press release.

1 week before scores released

- Participate in advanced backgrounder briefings with media and other key stakeholders.

Week of score release

- Participate in any events/briefings where the scores will be discussed.
- Share the press release with media and be prepared to field questions.
- Place op-ed(s).
- Use social media to deliver messages (tweet, post on Facebook, etc.).

After Release of the Scores

- Continue to participate in broader campaign outreach, if relevant.
- Continue to take advantage of every opportunity to reinforce key messages — especially with students, parents, and policymakers — focused on the additional and more targeted supports you and K–12 systems are now providing.