

FACT SHEET: CLOSING THE EXPECTATIONS GAP

What can higher education leaders do to help close the expectations gap?

- States must raise high school graduation requirements so that the courses students take to earn a diploma are consistent with the prerequisite courses needed to succeed in postsecondary education. Public postsecondary systems can reinforce state efforts by working with K-12 officials to determine the right set of courses most likely to lead to enrollment in credit-bearing, entry-level postsecondary courses postsecondary, and use these courses to establish course requirements for admission to postsecondary institutions.
- The tests students take in high school must better measure the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college. Proficiency on high school tests should mean that students are prepared for postsecondary education. Higher education leaders have an important role to play in supporting test development efforts so they are sufficiently rigorous to be used in some matter for college placement decisions.
- There must be an information feedback loop between postsecondary education and high schools that drive improvement in both sectors. In order for high schools to improve, they need information from postsecondary institutions about how well students are performing, particularly in their first-year coursework. Likewise, by sharing their challenges and successes in implementing a college-ready curriculum, secondary educators can help higher education anticipate student needs for remediation, refine first-year courses, and improve teacher preparation and professional development.

What are the benefits to closing the expectations gap? Higher education has a lot to gain by investing in public school reform efforts: reduced remediation, better instruction at the high school and college levels, improved student performance, and higher college graduation rates, as well as recognition for contributing to a policy agenda that has the potential to improve the long-term economic and social health of the country

For more on what higher education leaders can do to close the gap see Cohen and King (2007) in the Postsecondary Connection resource Library.