

## Career and College Readiness: Providing Opportunity and Options to All High School Graduates

There truly is no place like Hawai'i. Our state is the most geographically isolated chain of islands on earth, and boasts lush landscapes, beautiful beaches and a rich history unlike any other. We embrace our distinctive culture, and proudly stand out as the most unique of the 50 states.

To visitors, Hawai'i's beauty and appeal are enduring, but for locals, the reality of life in our state has shifted dramatically. Our economy, once built largely around agriculture and tourism, is now abundant in additional 21st century prospects in research and development, community services and healthcare. A modest level of skill and strong work ethic can no longer ensure high school graduates will find a steady job with a family-supporting wage and health benefits; employers today are seeking new hires who can succeed in the state's technology-rich, largely service-based economy. Education or training beyond high school is often required to obtain or advance to a living wage job.

Over time, these workforce demands will only increase. Economists project that by 2018, 65 percent of Hawai'i's jobs will require at least some postsecondary training or education and that well-paid opportunities for those with less education will decline each year.<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i's need for skilled and educated workers is 10th highest in the nation.

Unfortunately, too few of Hawai'i's high school graduates today are prepared for success in career paths and higher education. The state ranks 36th nationwide in the percentage of students who complete high school,<sup>2</sup> and 30th in the percentage of graduates who go to college immediately after earning their diploma.<sup>3</sup> Across the country, for every 100 students who enter high school in ninth grade, just 68 graduate within four years and just 42 enter college immediately following high school graduation. Of those who go to college only 12 graduate with a 2- or 4-year degree in a timely manner. In 2006, Hawai'i ranked 49th among states in the number of 9th graders who earn a college degree within 10 years of their high school freshman year.<sup>4</sup> Even in the best performing state, just 28 out of 100 ninth graders will graduate on time from college with a 2- or 4-year degree.

Raising the state's educational levels will require that all students graduate from high school prepared academically to succeed in their choice of training or apprenticeship programs, meaningful work that advances to a living wage job, postsecondary education or military service. With this in mind, the state's leaders in education and government have developed an ambitious—but achievable—roadmap for change, the cornerstone of which is a diploma that represents students' readiness for college and careers. This is included in the state's successful Race to the Top plan and the Hawai'i State Department of Education's strategic plan.

<sup>1</sup> Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/State-LevelAnalysis-web.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems: College-Going Rates of High School Graduates  
<http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=63&year=2008&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0>

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems: Public High School Graduation Rates  
<http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=24&year=2008&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2008&level=nation&mode=data&state=0>

In September 2011, the Hawai'i Department of Education recommended the new diploma to the State Board of Education, beginning with the Class of 2016, this year's eighth-graders. The current proposed diploma requires that students meet Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English/Language Arts, as well as complete a course of study that provides a well-rounded education.

The state's winning 2010 Race to the Top application stated Hawai'i's commitment to increasing its graduation rate from 80% to 90% and to prepare all high school graduates for success in college and careers. Achieving this goal will provide young people with more choices after high school and the necessary academic foundation for recent high school graduates to enter college without the need for remediation and to succeed in living wage jobs. It also will help the state achieve the Hawai'i P-20 Council's goal of having at least 55% of working age adults hold a two- or four-year college degree, and for all working age adults to be career and college ready and able to succeed in a living wage job, by 2025.

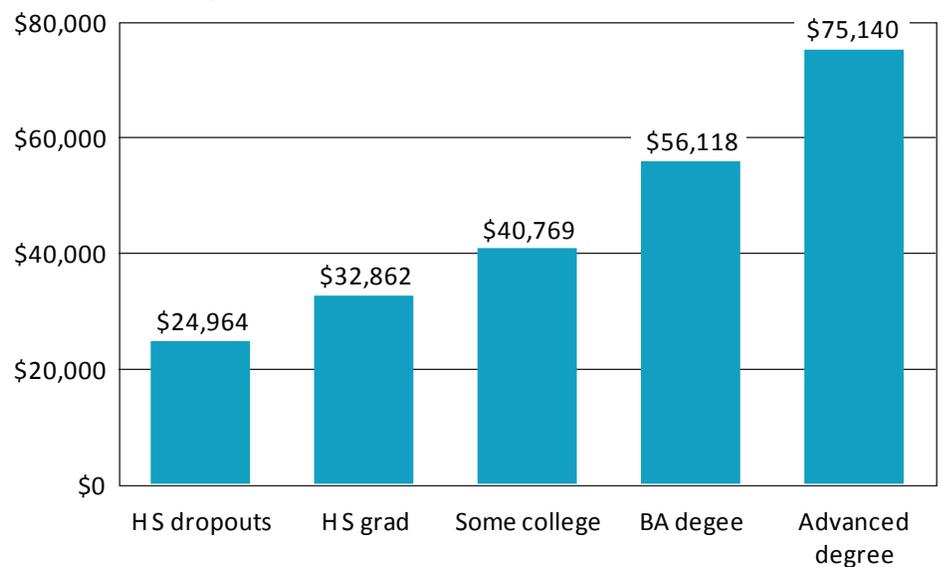
**Common Core State Standards have been adopted by 44 states plus Washington, DC. They define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate from high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))**

## WHY CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS FOR ALL?

Consider the facts: Changes in the economy have led to enhanced job requirements for everything from apprenticeship programs to entry-level positions in business to roles in the military. The basic skills these industries once sought are no longer enough: A 2007 analysis of entry-level job requirements in Hawai'i found that employees in entry-level jobs requiring only a high school diploma still need skills in complex reading and writing, logic and analysis, math and communication to advance in living wage jobs.<sup>5</sup>

Hawai'i has been struck by the economic decline like the rest of the country, but by 2018, statewide employment is expected to expand by 7 percent. Areas of growth will include jobs in education and health services (16 percent), professional and business services (nearly 7 percent), and leisure and hospitality industries (4 percent). Of the anticipated job openings by 2018, 54 percent will require at least a moderate amount of on-the-job training, and more than one-quarter will require at least a postsecondary vocational certificate or some type of college degree.<sup>6</sup> Far more jobs in Hawai'i will require a Bachelor's degree than in the nation as a whole; by 2018, Hawai'i will rank 12th nationwide.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1: 2007 U.S. Median Earnings for Full-Time Workers by Educational Attainment



Source: [www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p20-560.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p20-560.pdf)

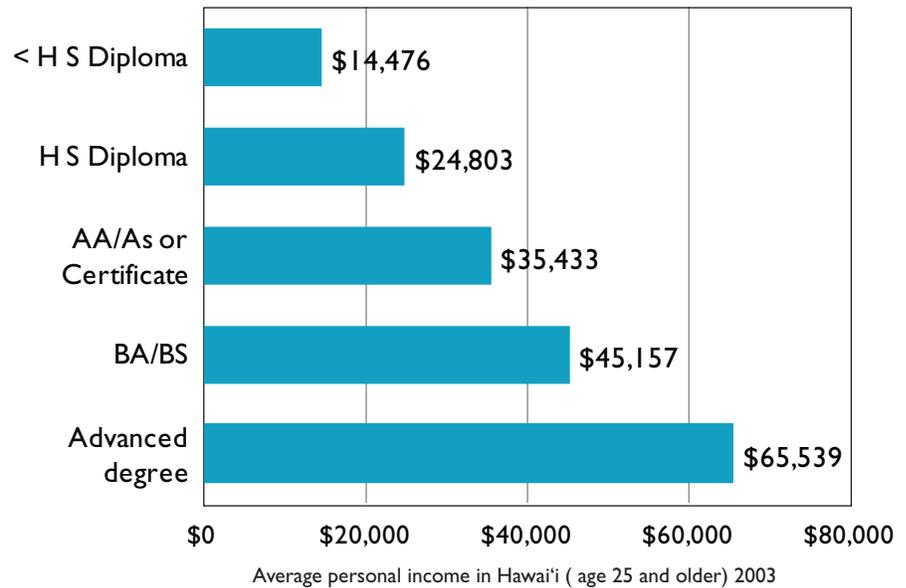
<sup>5</sup> 3 Point Consulting 2007: [http://www.p20hawaii.org/sites/default/files/P20\\_Careerready\\_full.pdf](http://www.p20hawaii.org/sites/default/files/P20_Careerready_full.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Employment Projections for Industries and Occupations 2008-2018, State of Hawai'i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

<sup>7</sup> Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, <http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/states/>

Opportunities and earning potential will be much higher for those with more education. Nationally, salaries in 2007 averaged \$25,000 a year for high school dropouts to more than \$75,000 for professionals with an advanced degree.<sup>8</sup> In Hawai'i, jobs that require postsecondary education and training pay an average salary of at least twice that of those that do not require any additional training. For example, registered nurses earn about \$80,000 a year, retail supervisors earn about \$40,000, and food service workers earn about \$20,000.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 2: 2003 Hawai'i Average Annual Income by Degree



The benefits of more education extend well beyond financial gains. Individuals with education beyond high school are more likely to be employed, leading to a reduced reliance on public assistance and other government-provided social services. In addition, studies show that those with higher levels of education report better health, a longer life expectancy, better consumer decision-making, more civic engagement, higher charitable giving, increased volunteerism and an improved ability to adapt to and use technology.<sup>10</sup>

In short: Whether it's a moderate amount of on-the-job training or an advanced degree, any amount of education beyond high school is better than none, and young people who graduate with the skills to pursue training after high school have an important advantage over their less-educated peers.

Hawai'i's results show that too few students are finishing high school academically prepared to succeed in the new economy. On the 2011 Hawai'i State Assessment, 66 percent scored proficient or higher in Reading, but just 54 percent did so in Math. On the 2010 SAT, Hawai'i's students scored below the national average on the math, critical reading and writing exams.

This poor performance has left many doors closed for our students, including the military. Last year Hawai'i ranked last in the nation in the percentage of recent high school graduates who scored high enough on the military entrance exam to enlist; just 59% of recent graduates demonstrated the minimum academic skills required.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, few of Hawai'i's young adults pursuing military service qualified for army incentives which provides more opportunities for higher pay, training, education and career advancement.

And many who go to college also are struggling. Of the graduates in the class of 2010 who enrolled in the University of Hawai'i system, 36 percent enrolled in remedial math and 35 percent enrolled in remedial English coursework in their first year, whereas 20 percent enrolled in college-level mathematics and 36 percent enrolled in college-level English.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007 [www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p20-560.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p20-560.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Employment Projections for Industries and Occupations 2008-2018, State of Hawai'i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

<sup>10</sup> "The Investment Payoff" A 50-State Analysis of the Public and Private Benefits of Higher Education <http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/g-1/InvestmentPayoff.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> The Education Trust: Shut Out of the Military, December 2010

<sup>12</sup> 2009 College and Career Readiness Reports: <http://www.p20Hawaii.org/node/122>

## NEW DIPLOMA WILL INCLUDE MORE RIGOROUS ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Young people need better reading, writing and problem-solving skills and learning opportunities in high school to prepare them for success in the workplace and in postsecondary education and training.

The academic requirements of the proposed high school diploma are aligned with the expectations of colleges and employers locally and nationally and are tied to international benchmarks. When approved by the State Board of Education (BOE), the diploma will go into effect for 2016 graduates (eighth-graders in 2011-2012), and Hawai'i will join the 21 other states and the District of Columbia that have already adopted college- and career-ready diploma requirements.<sup>13</sup>

Today, students can graduate with either a “basic” high school diploma, or the voluntary, more demanding Board of Education Recognition Diploma (also referred to as BOE “Step Up” Recognition Diploma) which contains more rigorous coursework in math, English and science, as well as a senior project, and are similar in rigor to the proposed high school diploma.

In the proposed diploma requirements, beginning with the Class of 2016, *all* graduates will be expected to meet college and career ready standards in English/Language Arts and in mathematics based on the Common Core State Standards. Students will demonstrate their career and college readiness through coursework such as expository writing and new mathematics courses being developed that will address Common Core expectations which include content typically taught in Algebra 2, statistics and data analysis.

Figure 3: Requirements for Proposed and Current High School Diploma

Requirement	Proposed High School Diploma (beginning with Class of 2016)	High School Diploma (beginning with Class of 2010)
English	4 credits including 1 credit ELA 1, 1 credit ELA 2 and .5 credit Expository writing or CCSS equivalent	4 credits (including 1 credit ELA 1 and 1 credit ELA 2)
Mathematics	3 credits including Algebra 1, Geometry and CCSS equivalent	3 credits
Science	3 credits including 1 credit biology and 2 credits in lab sciences or standards proficiency-based equivalent	3 credits
Social Studies	4 credits including Modern History of Hawai'i and Participation in Democracy, or standards proficiency-based equivalent	4 credits including Modern History of Hawai'i and Participation in Democracy
World Language, Career/Technical Education, or Arts	2 credits in one of the specified programs of study or equivalent	2 credits of the same group
Health	.5 credit or equivalent	.5 credit
Physical Education	1 credit or equivalent	1 credit
Personal Transition Plan	.5 credit or equivalent	.5 credit
Electives	6 credits	6 credits
Total Credits	24 credits	24 credits

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.achieve.org/state-graduation-requirements-table>

Until then, the voluntary BOE “Step Up” Recognition Diploma—with requirements similar to the proposed high school diploma—will remain available and will be strongly encouraged. Already more than 12,000 students in the graduating classes of 2013-15 have pledged to “Step Up” and earn the optional diploma, and employers, colleges and scholarship programs are providing incentives for graduates earning the BOE Recognition Diploma. Students are committed because they know that successfully completing rigorous coursework in high school will help them prepare for success in career, college and life.

The proposed high school diploma represents an unprecedented commitment to strengthening Hawai‘i’s public education system and improving the future for every student, whether their post-high school plans are military service, the workforce, an apprenticeship, community college or a four-year college. Change is never easy, and an adjustment of this magnitude will require planning, resources and persistence. To succeed, this effort requires the support of educators, business leaders, legislators and the community at large.

## **PARENTS AND THE PUBLIC SUPPORT MORE RIGOR FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS**

The public already supports this change. A 2010 nationwide survey of American voters found broad, deep and fully bipartisan support for policies designed to prepare all students for success after high school in college and careers.<sup>14</sup> Here in Hawai‘i, parents and community leaders also are eager for change. A 2010 survey found that the vast majority support requirements even more rigorous than what is being considered by the BOE. In fact, 68 percent of the public supports requiring all students to meet high school graduation requirements equivalent to four year-college admissions requirements, even for those who do not plan to attend college.<sup>15</sup>

Other states and large districts have demonstrated success in this pursuit. San Jose school district required all students to complete the University of California’s minimum subject-area requirements to earn a high school diploma, and by 2004, 65 percent of graduates completed all of the courses with a C or better, while the district’s high school graduation rate increased.<sup>16</sup> Indiana—one of the first states to adopt the rigorous graduation standard—has moved from 40th to 10th in the nation in the percentage of high school graduates going to college,<sup>17</sup> and Texas’ graduation rates remained steady while students’ career and college readiness increased once more rigorous graduation requirements were mandated.<sup>18</sup>

## **HARD, BUT ESSENTIAL WORK**

A transition of this magnitude is never easy, and we have far to go to meet these new goals. This is hard work, but essential. Our children, and our state, deserve nothing less.

## **ABOUT HAWAI‘I P-20**

Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education (Hawai‘i P-20) is a statewide partnership led by the Early Learning Council, the Hawai‘i State Department of Education, and the University of Hawai‘i System. Hawai‘i P-20 strengthens the education pipeline from early childhood through higher education so that all students achieve career and college success.



<sup>14</sup> <http://www.achieve.org/files/AchieveClosingtheExpectationsGap2011.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> P-20 Survey

<sup>16</sup> Achieve, 2010. Public Opinion Poll Achieve, Inc, 2007: Aligning High School Graduation Requirements with the Real World: A Road Map for States

<sup>17</sup> Edward P. St. John, Glenda D. Musoba, and Choon Geun Chung. 2004. “Academic Preparation and College Success, Analyses of Indiana’s 2000 High School Class.” Prepared for the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Lumina Foundation for Education

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.achieve.org/files/AchieveClosingtheExpectationsGap2011.pdf>