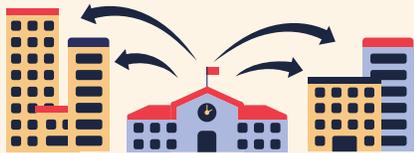


## ISSUE SUMMARY:

# RPU's Create Pathways to Prosperity

As pillars of their communities, the country's 520 regional public universities (RPUs) are fundamentally linked with the needs and development of their local workforce. Often founded as normal schools or state teachers' colleges, RPUs historically produced the educators, nurses, engineers, accountants, entrepreneurs, data scientists, and other professionals needed to grow America's economy.

RPUs seek to expand their regional workforce by implementing policies and pathways that support on-time degree completion while improving student retention. By partnering with industry and community leaders, RPUs meet not only the educational needs of their local communities but also support economic and social growth, benefiting graduates and the workforce.



**Regional public universities create pathways to prosperity for all students, providing an affordable education while promoting degrees that meet local workforce needs.**

## RPU's: Learn Local, Stay Local

### UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY

Rural America is facing a health care crisis. The lack of qualified graduates and consolidation of educational opportunities to large population centers are slowly suffocating rural hospitals across the nation. In Nebraska, the health science department at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) has partnered with rural hospitals and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) to secure a talent pipeline of future, local health care professionals. Through extensive collaboration and professional development initiatives like the [Kearney Health Opportunities Program \(KHOP\)](#), the health Sciences department has grown into the largest academic program at UNK. In exchange for full tuition scholarships from UNK, and guaranteed admission to UNMC, students commit to practicing in rural Nebraska.

In addition, UNK has invested at both ends of the talent pipeline through programs that foster interest in health care-related occupations among future students and placement partnerships for recent graduates. The Hospital Partner Program offers recent health science graduates positions in rural-serving hospitals, while Health Science Explorers, a pipeline program for students in the seventh through 12th grades, currently serves more than 800 participants each year.

**90%** acceptance rate  
(three-year average)

among health science students applying to clinical and professional school.

**19** rural hospitals

across Nebraska have joined the Hospital Partner Program.

**234** KHOP students

have matriculated to UNMC since inception.

# RPUs: Accelerating Graduation

## LEHMAN COLLEGE (CUNY)

If most learning in life occurs outside the classroom, shouldn't students get credit for past relevant work experience? Lehman College (CUNY) thought so. To make higher education more affordable and support degree completion, Lehman College extended its [Credit for Prior Learning \(CPL\)](#) initiative to all students—from traditional learners to near completers to high school graduates transitioning to higher education—allowing them to earn elective credits, required by New York for degree completion, through various approved programs.

Unlike traditional CPL programs, Lehman's is not only focused on granting adult learners credit for educational experiences outside the college classroom but also extends to traditional students who may be a few credits shy of graduating. Via the new CPL approach, students could earn one to three elective credits at the end of their degree to satisfy missing elective credits. CPL may be granted for certificates, military service credits, proficiency exams, and second-language competencies, among other options.

- Nearly **50 students earned CPL credits** to complete their degrees during the spring and fall semesters of 2019.
- In AY2023-24, Lehman College awarded **2,052 students** a total of **5,278 credits** through CPL.
- During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lehman College implemented a **COVID-19 certificate** that allowed students to earn one credit for completing all of the required training to obtain employment as a COVID-19 tracer, **enrolling 192 students** in the program.

# RPUs: Educating Tomorrow's Educators

## NEVADA STATE UNIVERSITY

Committed to building a larger teacher workforce in Nevada, the Nevada State University's School of Education founded the [Teacher Academy Pipeline Project \(TAPP\)](#). Partnering with local high schools, this initiative offers concurrent enrollment opportunities—commonly known as dual-credit courses—to build a pipeline of future teachers who ultimately graduate with education majors and go on to strengthen and revitalize the state's workforce.

TAPP offers scholarships and intensive college preparation workshops, creating pathways to degree attainment that align skills and knowledge gained with workforce needs. Credits earned in high school can shorten students' enrollment periods and reduce their student loan debt. Students gain early professional identity formation and a sense of belonging, both of which have been shown to support persistence and timely college graduation.

**627%** enrollment increase

Starting in 2017, TAPP enrollment at Nevada State has grown from 18 students in fall 2018 to 131 students enrolled in fall 2023.

- Nearly **75% of TAPP students stay in southern Nevada** after graduation.
- Students dedicated to pursuing a degree in education have risen considerably, from **seven education majors in fall 2018 to 85 in fall 2023**, with TAPP persistence rates **6-8% higher than average**.