By Nebraska Governor

Dave Heineman

Nebraska's Independent Colleges are an important part of the overall success of our state. Recently, I joined education leaders for an event in Seward to celebrate the kick-off of Nebraska Independent College Week.

I'd like to highlight the work of our Nebraska Independent Colleges. Education and jobs are the keys to Nebraska's future. An important mission for our state is to ensure that our students are prepared to compete in a 21st century, technology-driven, global, free market economy. Nebraska's nine private colleges provide excellent opportunities for students to learn the skills they will need today in order to be successful in the future.

Nebraska Independent College Week presents a special opportunity for Nebraska high school students and their parents to visit the nine independent colleges located in Bellevue, Omaha, Crete, Fremont, Lincoln, Seward, and York.

These colleges and universities are Bellevue University, the College of Saint Mary, Concordia University, Doane College, Grace University, Midland University, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Union College and York College.

The Nebraska Independent College Foundation was founded in 1953 as one of 38 state and regional organizations representing more than 600 independent colleges and universities around the country. They have provided over $32 million to its member institutions with the help of private businesses and individual support.

Nebraska Independent Colleges educate more than 12,000 students a year with an average budget of $140 million. This has an economic impact as well, generating a $300 million spending impact in Nebraska. Combined, Nebraska Independent College Foundation institutions are among the top ten largest employers in Nebraska.

These institutions are actively involved in educating the State of Nebraska's greatest resource - our students. The independent colleges are helping them as they grow and develop into the community leaders of tomorrow.

We invite you to discover for yourself the quality of educational programs offered at these institutions and the affordability of attending an independent college. I encourage prospective students and their parents to make time for a personal visit to Nebraska Independent College campuses as they prepare to make the important decision of selecting a college. Nebraska's Independent Colleges offer a great opportunity to further their student's education.

Education success and economic success are directly linked. We want our graduates and young professionals to be prepared for high-quality, high-skill jobs with dynamic companies doing business in Nebraska.

A high school education is no longer sufficient. Every student needs at least two years of college and preferably four years. Education is an investment that will pay dividends for individuals, families and communities throughout Nebraska for years to come.