



## GOVERNOR'S STEM ADVISORY COUNCIL

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### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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#### **ACT report reveals increase in student STEM interests in Iowa and US**

*Interest is high, but STEM test scores remain low*

**CEDAR FALLS, Iowa** – A new report from ACT shows student interests in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) continues to increase in Iowa and across the country. The “Condition of STEM 2014” reveals nearly half of all ACT-tested graduates show an interest in STEM, totaling just under 900,000 students across the nation.

While a large number of students have an interest in STEM, ACT test scores remain low in terms of predicting college success in most STEM fields. Overall, just 43 percent of all ACT-tested graduates in the U.S. met the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in math, and only 37 percent met the Benchmark in science.

In Iowa, STEM interests increased by two percent in the last four years to match the national average of 49 percent, and interests in all STEM fields are above or equal to the national average, except in engineering.

The report also shows the number of high school graduates interested in teaching STEM subjects is low compared to the future demand for such teachers. The proposed federal STEM Teacher Pathways program works to produce 100,000 math and science teachers in the next decade. Yet, out of the 1.8 million graduates tested in 2014, roughly 4,500 students (less than 1 percent) expressed an interest in teaching math and only 1,000 showed interest to teach science.

“The numbers we’re seeing are not likely to meet the expected demand for future STEM teachers,” said Jon Erickson, ACT president. “Highly qualified teachers play an essential role not only in preparing students to succeed, but also in raising awareness and interest in STEM careers, which are vital to our nation’s competitiveness in the global economy.”

A partnership between ACT and the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council helps recognize these opportunities.

“The ACT studies provide us with another valuable tool to measure the success of our STEM programs aimed at increasing the interest of all young Iowans in STEM majors and careers,” said Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, co-chair of the STEM Council. “While the scores indicate a growing interest in STEM fields, we must continue with our mission to not only foster this student interest with STEM education in the classroom, but also provide them with high-quality instruction to be inspired on a daily basis.”

ACT-tested high school graduates’ scores indicate diversity in STEM continues to progress in Iowa. Female interest remains below male interest, but both interest levels for Iowa students rank higher than the national average. All but one sub-group in Iowa with an expressed and measured interest in STEM demonstrated a higher percentage of benchmark attainment than the national average.

“Every young Iowan deserves a high-quality STEM education, regardless of their race, location or family income,” said STEM Council co-chair and Vermeer CEO, Mary Andringa. “The future of Iowa’s economy and workforce depends solely on each and every student within our state’s border. It’s vital to provide them with the proper education that will lead them to fulfilling careers and high quality lives in Iowa.”

The “Condition of STEM 2014” Report for the nation and for each state are available for free on ACT’s website:  
[www.act.org/stemcondition](http://www.act.org/stemcondition).

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### **About the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council**

Established in July 2011 via Governor's Executive Order, the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council is a public-private partnership of educators, companies, and Iowa students and families addressing policies and programs designed to improve Iowa's educational system focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The Council works to engage and prepare students for a career-ready workforce path, regain our State's historic leadership position in education, and provide a vital competitive economic advantage now, and for the future, to ensure that every Iowa student has access to world-class STEM education opportunities. The 47-member Council is chaired by Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds and Vermeer Corp. CEO Mary Andringa. For more information, visit [www.IowaSTEM.gov](http://www.IowaSTEM.gov).

### **About ACT**

ACT is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides assessment, research, information and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. Each year, we serve millions of people in high schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses and government agencies, nationally and internationally. Though designed to meet a wide array of needs, all ACT programs and services have one guiding purpose—helping people achieve education and workplace success.