

NEBRASKA'S



COORDINATING COMMISSION
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

2018 BIENNIAL REPORT

Covering December 2016 to December 2018

APPROVED BY THE COORDINATING COMMISSION

November 26, 2018

COMMISSIONERS

W. Scott Wilson, Chair
Plattsmouth, Member-at-Large

Dr. Deborah Frison, Vice Chair
Omaha, District 2

Colleen A. Adam
Hastings, District 5

Gwenn Aspen
Omaha, Member-at-Large

Dr. John Bernthal
Lincoln, District 1

Dr. Ron Hunter
Hay Springs, District 6

Mary Lauritzen
West Point, Member-at-Large

Dwayne Probyn
Papillion, District 4

Dr. Paul Von Behren
Ames, District 3

STAFF

Dr. Mike Baumgartner
Executive Director

Miste Adamson
Administrative Assistant

Dr. Kathleen Fimple
Academic Programs Officer

Jill Heese
Research Coordinator

Kadi Lukesh
Office Manager, Budget Coordinator,
Bookkeeper

Ritchie Morrow
Financial Aid Officer

Helen Pope
Executive Assistant

Gary Timm
Chief Finance and Administrative Officer

Joe Velasquez
Database Manager

Mike Wemhoff
Facilities Officer

This report and others are available at the Coordinating Commission's website:
ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports

Table of Contents

Introduction—*What is the Coordinating Commission?*

Page 2

Nebraska's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*

Page 3

Financial Aid

Page 5

Reports and Analysis

Page 9

Academic Programs

Page 12

New or Out-of-State Institutions

Page 13

Capital Construction and Facilities

Page 15

Budget Reviews and Recommendations

Page 16

Initiatives, Programs, and Updates

Page 17



NEBRASKA'S
COORDINATING COMMISSION
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

2018 Biennial Report

Provided pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1412 (12)

In 1990, Nebraskans saw a need for an independent entity to coordinate the state's public higher education institutions from a statewide — rather than an institutional — perspective. To accomplish this, voters amended the state Constitution, creating the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education [Article VIII-14]. The Coordinating Commission is an independent agency with a governing board

of Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature. There are nine full-time employees and one part-time employee on the Commission's staff, making it one of the smallest agencies of its kind in the country.

The 2018 Biennial Report provides an overview of the Coordinating Commission's accomplishments during 2017 and 2018.

THE COORDINATING COMMISSION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Creating and putting into action a comprehensive statewide plan to guide Nebraska's higher education system
- Partnering with Legislators to develop innovative and results-driven higher education policy
- Helping low-income Nebraska students attend college by awarding nearly \$19 million in need-based financial aid programs and developing state financial aid strategy
- Administering the Community College Gap Assistance Program, which offers financial aid to students who want to work in high-need fields
- Ensuring the efficient use of taxpayer funds by approving or disapproving postsecondary construction projects that rely on tax funds and reviewing institutional biennial budget requests
- Approving or disapproving academic programs based on specific criteria: need, demand, unnecessary duplication, resources, and cost
- Assembling and analyzing statewide data and publishing reports tied to the state's higher education goals. The Coordinating Commission is the only Nebraska entity that does this kind of work on a statewide level
- Administering roughly \$98 million in annual State appropriations to Nebraska's six community colleges
- Helping teachers and underserved populations through the administration of federal education grants
- Saving Nebraska colleges and universities thousands of dollars through administration of a nationwide distance learning agreement.

What does the Commission do?

**Implements a statewide, comprehensive plan to guide
Nebraska's higher education system, in collaboration
with the state's colleges and universities**

Nebraska's Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education

The Nebraska Constitution gives the Coordinating Commission the authority to adopt, and revise as needed, a comprehensive plan for postsecondary education. The Constitution states that this plan must include: (a) definitions of the role and mission of each public postsecondary educational institution within any general assignments of role and mission as prescribed by the Legislature and (b) plans for facilities which utilize tax funds designated by the Legislature.

The Commission's authority to adopt and revise a comprehensive plan is further elaborated in statute, which states that the purposes of the Commission shall be to: (1) develop an ongoing comprehensive statewide plan for the operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of postsecondary education, (2) identify and enact policies to meet the educational, research, and public service needs of the state, and (3) effect the best use of available resources through the elimination of unnecessary duplication of

programs and facilities among Nebraska's public institutions. The same statute dictates that the Commission approach postsecondary education from a statewide perspective. The Legislature also established in statute that the comprehensive plan must include an assessment of the postsecondary educational needs of the state and include a number of policy guidelines.

The current comprehensive plan is the Commission's second. It was adopted in 2000 after the Legislature passed LB 816 in 1999, which called for a review and revision of the Commission's first comprehensive plan approved in June 1992. Throughout 2015 and 2016, the Commission went through the process of updating Chapter One of the plan.

Chapter One includes a vision statement for postsecondary education in Nebraska; an examination of the state's evolving demographic, economic, political, and educational forces and their potential impacts; a series of statewide goals; and, new to the plan, a number of national and institutional comparisons for the state's

public institutions and for state higher education as a whole. The comparisons aim for Nebraska to be among the 10 best states in national rankings – including educational attainment among adults -- and for individual campuses to rank among the five best institutions in peer comparisons. Currently, Nebraska ranks

11th in the percentage of adults aged 25-34 years old with an associate's degree or higher and 13th in the percentage of adults ages 25-64 with an associate's degree or higher.

The full plan is available on the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

VISION FOR NEBRASKA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Nebraskans will reap many benefits from affordable, accessible, and high-quality postsecondary education. Nebraska's people will value and support postsecondary institutions that are vital, vigorous, and visionary. Each postsecondary institution will fulfill its role and mission with distinction by being responsive to changing academic, workforce, societal, economic, cultural, and community development needs. Together, Nebraska's postsecondary institutions will provide access to educational opportunities that meet the diverse needs of students and citizens; create environments that foster student success; position Nebraska to excel in the global economy; and exercise careful, creative, and cooperative stewardship of available resources.

*- Chapter One, Comprehensive Statewide
Plan for Postsecondary Education*

What does the Commission do?

Administers student financial aid programs

Financial Aid

The Commission administers the Nebraska Opportunity Grant (NOG), the Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program, and the Community College Gap Assistance Program. The Commission also conducts annual audits of postsecondary institutions in the state that participate in the state financial aid programs.

Nebraska Opportunity Grant

The Nebraska Opportunity Grant, formerly known as the Nebraska State Grant, is awarded to students in consultation with financial aid administrators at Nebraska's postsecondary institutions. These grants are awarded to students who are residents of Nebraska, attend a Nebraska postsecondary institution, and have a minimum Expected Family Contribution (EFC) as determined by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

In 2016-17, \$10.1 million of the grant's funding came from State lottery funds and \$6.9 million from the State's general funds. In 2017-18, lottery funding increased to \$10.7 million while the general funds appropriation declined to \$6.7 million.

Nebraska Opportunity Grant Biennium History:

2016-17:

Total awarded: \$16,889,748

- 12,928 students received a grant (37% of Nebraska Pell Grant- eligible students)
 - Public institutions: 9,318 students
- \$1,355.67 average award
 - Private, non-profit: 3,029 students
- \$1,119.48 average award
 - Proprietary/for-profit: 581 students
- \$1,491.76 average award

Average grant awarded: \$1,306.45

2017-18:

Total awarded: \$17,393,998

- 12,850 students received a grant (36% of Nebraska eligible students)
 - Public institutions: 9,304 students
- \$1,387.89 average award
 - Private, non-profit: 3,003 students
- \$1,123.04 average award
 - Proprietary/for-profit: 543 students
- \$2,041.54 average award

Average grant awarded: \$1,353.62

Access College Early Scholarship Program

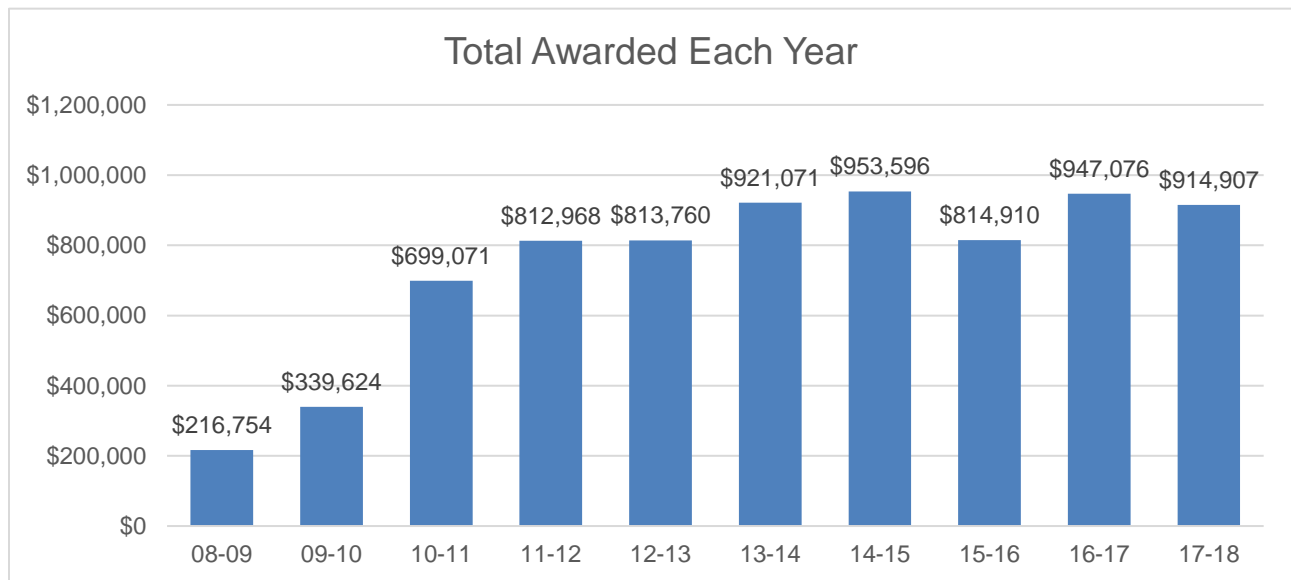
The Access College Early Scholarship Program awards scholarships to high school students from low-income families who enroll in a college course at a participating public or private postsecondary institution while the student is still in high school. The Commission recommended the creation of this program in 2007, funding it through the transfer of funds from a relatively inactive program, the Community Scholarship Foundation Program, to the ACE program. (The CSFP was eliminated.)

Current national research indicates that high school students who take college courses while in high school:

- Increase academic rigor during high school;
- Remain in school and graduate at higher rates;
- Enroll in college at an increased rate;
- Streamline their transitions from high school to college;
- Have a head start on their chosen postsecondary programs;
- Save money once in college; and
- Return for their college sophomore years at higher rates.

The Commission believes family income should not exclude a student from taking college courses while in high school.

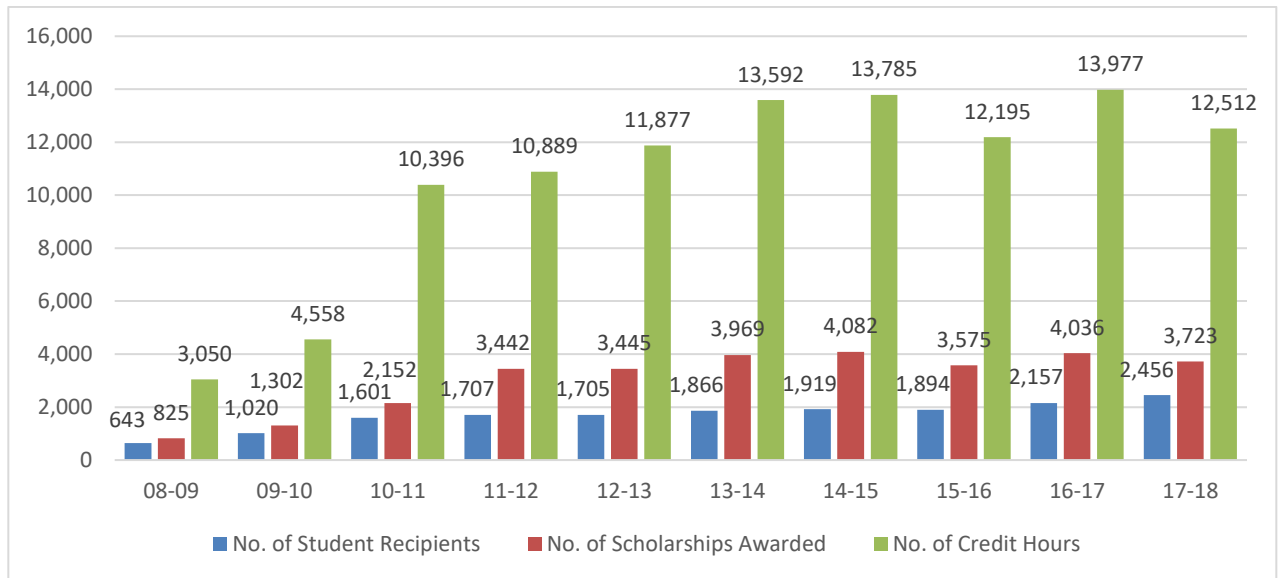
ACE Scholarship Program Funding



(ACE charts continued on next page)

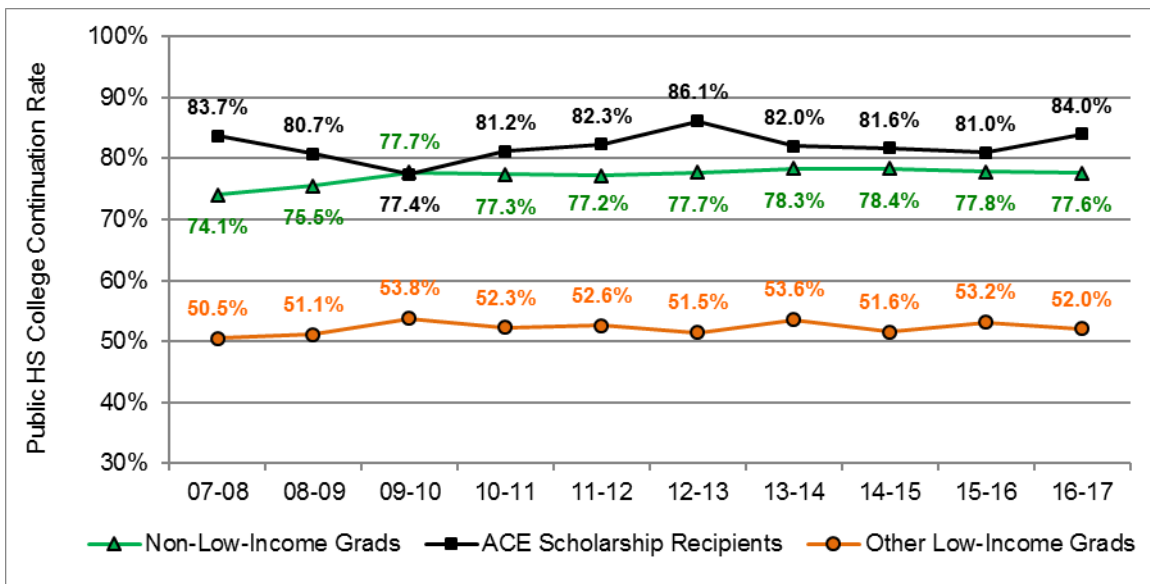
(ACE charts continued)

Growth of ACE Scholarship Program Awards, Recipients and Credit Hours



Nationally and in Nebraska, students who take college courses while in high school go on to college at higher rates.

Nebraska Public High School College Continuation Rates 2007-08 through 2016-17

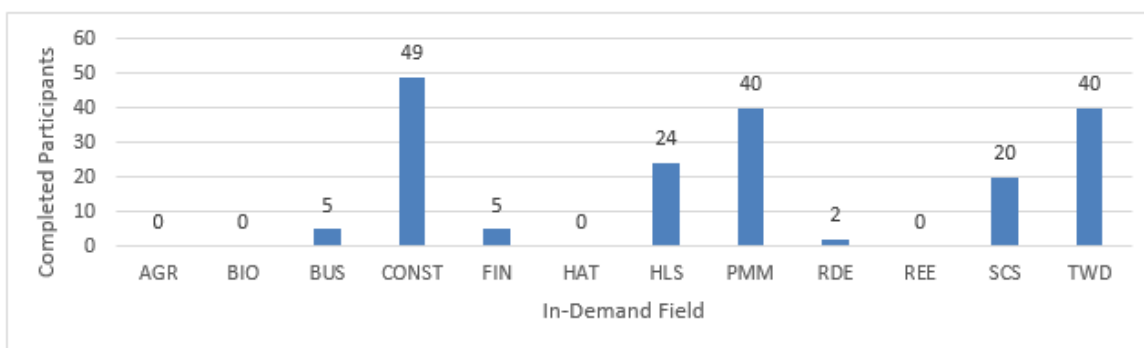


Community College Gap Assistance Program

In 2015 the Legislature gave authority to the Coordinating Commission to administer the Community College Gap Assistance Program, which had a formal start date of July 1, 2016. Through lottery funds, this program will receive roughly \$1.4 million annually. These funds will be distributed to the state’s six community colleges, which will recruit and select eligible low-income students in eligible non-credit vocational

programs to receive grants. Student grants can be used for tuition, direct training costs, required books and equipment, and fees, including those for industry testing services and background check services. Legislation requires that eligible programs be for “in-demand” occupations, such as health services; transportation, warehousing, and distribution logistics; agriculture and food processing; precision metals manufacturing; software and computer sciences; and hospitality and tourism.

**Gap Assistance Program Completed Participants
In-Demand Programs of Study Completed - 2016-17 and 2017-18**



AGR	Agriculture and food processing	HLS	Health services
BIO	Biosciences	PMM	Precision metals manufacturing
BUS	Business management and administrative services	RDE	Research, development, and engineering services
CONST	Construction	REE	Renewable energy
FIN	Financial services	SCS	Software and computer services
HAT	Hospitality and tourism	TWD	Transportation, warehousing, and distribution logistics

What does the Commission do?

Provides information and advice on higher education to the Legislature and Governor. Conducts research and publishes reports on issues regarding higher education.

Reports and Analysis

The Commission utilizes extensive data to produce a wide array of objective, comprehensive reports. This in-depth research provides an independent — and invaluable — voice within Nebraska’s postsecondary education system. The Coordinating Commission is the only entity in the state that conducts such research.

CCPE research is used by Legislators, the Governor’s office, media, higher education institutions, other state agencies, and the public. Following are descriptions of the Commission-produced reports during the last two years.

All of these reports are available on the Commission’s website at ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

Budget and Financial Analyses

Postsecondary Education Operating Budget Recommendations for 2019-21 *(October 2018)*

This is a statutorily required analysis of public institutional budget requests. It includes information about higher education appropriations, affordability, access and accountability, discussions of statewide funding issues, and recommendations. *(See page 16 of this document for more information.)*

Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization for 2019-21 *(October 2018)*

This statutorily required report includes the Commission’s funding and priority recommendations on capital construction budget requests from the Nebraska State College System, the University of Nebraska, and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis. *(See page 15 of this document for more information.)*

Tuition, Fees, and College Affordability Report

(September 2018)

This statutorily required report covers public policy issues relating to tuition, fees, and financial aid for students in Nebraska. It shows how Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions rank on these points when compared to their Commission-designated peer institutions.

Among the report's general findings:

- Nebraskans continue to show they value higher education, despite its rising costs;
- As tuition and mandatory fees continue to rise, financial aid is a necessity and increasingly important for many students;
- Participation and success rates for students from median-, low-, and very low- income families would likely increase if additional financial assistance could be provided by the state.

Did you know?

In 2015-16, Nebraska ranked 34th among states in need-based student aid grant dollars per full-time undergraduate enrollment, at \$201.

Source: 2018 Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid Report

Academic Analyses

Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls *(December 2018)*

Historically, this report has described the types of distance education courses available to Nebraska residents, what institutions offer distance education, how distance education is delivered, and how many students are taking advantage of distance education. Due to the ubiquity of distance education opportunities, for 2018 the Commission decided to report only data related to dual enrollment college courses offered to Nebraska high school students.

Dashboards

College Continuation Rates *(Last revised August 2018)*

This dashboard provides our estimate of college-going rates for each of Nebraska's public high schools that awarded regular high school diplomas in 2007-2008 through 2016-2017. Data users also can download an Excel file of the entire dataset, including our estimate of college-going rates, by county, for the high school graduating class of 2005-06 (includes public and private schools).

Degrees and Other Awards *(Last revised June 2018)*

These dashboards summarize the number of degrees and awards conferred by Nebraska's public colleges and universities, independent colleges and universities, and for-profit/career schools, as reported in the federal IPEDS surveys. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's *2018 Factual Look at Higher*

Education in Nebraska: Degrees and Other Awards Conferred 2006-2007 through 2016-2017.

Enrollment (Last revised August 2018)

These dashboards summarize enrollments at Nebraska's public colleges and universities, independent colleges and universities, and for-profit/career schools, as reported in the federal IPEDS surveys. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's 2018 *Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Enrollment (Fall enrollment: 2007 through 2017; 12-month enrollment: 2007-08 through 2016-17).*

KEY FINDING: The Attainment Gap

A consequence of the disparities in high school graduation rates, college continuation rates, and college graduation rates is that Nebraska's gap in educational attainment between whites and minorities (i.e., not white non-Hispanic) is the third largest in the nation. In Nebraska, 54.4% of 25- to 44-year old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate's degree or higher. In comparison, only 27.5% of 25- to 44-year-old minorities have completed an associate's degree or higher. The net difference is an attainment gap of 26.8 percentage points. Nationally, 48.8% of 25- to 44-year-old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate's degree or higher. In comparison, only 32.4% of 25- to 44-year-old minorities have completed an associate's degree or higher.

- 2018 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report, pg. S20

Other Analyses, Publications

Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report (March 2017, 2018)

This statutorily required annual report provides data to the Nebraska Legislature to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three key priorities for Nebraska's postsecondary education system developed by the 2003 LR 174 Higher Education Task Force and incorporated in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1428 (3). They are:

- Increase the number of students who enter postsecondary education;
- Increase the proportion of students who enroll and successfully persist through degree program completion; and
- Reduce, eliminate, and then reverse the net out-migration of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment.

Factual Look at Higher Education in

Nebraska (2017, 2018) This annual analysis uses data from the federal IPEDS surveys to provide comparative data for Nebraska's higher education institutions. The report is released in two sections: Enrollment and Degrees and Other Award.

Measuring Accomplishments (2017, 2018)

This annual report is a companion piece to the *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*. Data from a variety of sources is used to measure Nebraska's progress toward achieving the major statewide goals outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan* through national comparisons and institutional peer comparisons.

What does the Commission do?

Authorizes academic programs

Academic Programs

Existing Programs Review

The Commission is constitutionally required to review, monitor, and approve or disapprove each public institution's existing and proposed new academic programs to provide consistency with the *Comprehensive Plan* and to prevent unnecessary duplication.

During the 2017-18 biennium, the Commission reviewed 404 existing programs. Of those, 347 were approved to continue and 41 were discontinued by the institutions.

The Commission also reviewed 28 program assessments after they were returned to the originating institutions with follow-up questions.

Approval of Proposed New Academic Programs

In the past two years, the Commission reviewed and approved 25 proposals for new academic programs and organizational units at public institutions. One proposal was withdrawn. Another 52 proposed programs were reviewed and determined to be reasonable and moderate extensions of existing programs,

thus requiring no action by the Commission.

Consumer Protection

Closed Institutions When four-year institutions close, state statutes require their records to be transferred to the registrar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Commission facilitates record transfer and assists students in obtaining transcripts, often for several years after closure. There were no campus closures in the 2017-18 biennium, but the Commission staff continued to assist students from Wright Career College and ITT Technical Institute, which closed in 2016.

Student Complaints State statutes provide an avenue for students to file a complaint against an institution if it has violated the Postsecondary Institution Act. Few student complaints rise to this level. Nevertheless, Commission staff assist numerous students in resolving their complaints, often walking them through the complaint process at their institution, explaining financial aid issues, or putting them in touch with the appropriate person at their institution. Documented complaints conservatively average roughly 25 per year. Many others are answered by a phone call and are not formally recorded.

What does the Commission do?

**Considers and approves or disapproves proposals
from new or out-of-state institutions to operate in
Nebraska**

New or out-of-state institutions

Any out-of-state institution seeking to offer courses or programs in Nebraska or any entity wishing to establish a new private institution in the state must receive approval from the Commission. These procedures are described in the Postsecondary Institution Act, passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor during the 2011

Legislative session. (This was a revision of previous statutes.) Title 281, Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 7, provides the rules and regulations for implementing the Postsecondary Institution Act. These rules received final State approval in November 2014.

Out-of-state institutions authorized in the 2016 biennium:

Crown College (Saint Bonifacius, Minnesota)

In August 2017 Crown College was approved to offer the Master of Christian Ministry through their Christian Studies program. The program is offered at Christ Community Church in Omaha. In January 2018 Crown was authorized to offer six additional degree programs: Biblical Studies, BS; Christian Ministry, BS; Psychology Counseling, BS; Christian Studies, MA; Counseling, MA; and Global Leadership, MA.

Purdue University Global (West Lafayette, Indiana)

In March 2018 Purdue University finalized a purchase agreement with Kaplan University. Kaplan University had campuses in Omaha and Lincoln and held a recurrent authorization to operate. Nebraska statutes specify that any time an institution has a change in ownership, the new owner must apply for a new authorization to operate. The state of Indiana approved Purdue University Global as a state-affiliated institution in 2017. In April the Commission approved Purdue University Global to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Pre-licensure BSN), an Associate of Science in

Nursing (AS), a Diploma in Dental Assisting, and a Certificate in Medical Assistant.

Andrews University
(Berrian Springs, Michigan)

Andrews University applied to offer periodic intensive seminars at Union College as part of the graduate coursework leading to a Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry. The Commission granted the authorization to operate in June 2018.

Renewals and Additional Programs

In addition, eight new programs or courses were approved for institutions previously authorized to operate, and 11 institutions renewed their recurrent authorizations to operate.

What does the Commission do?

Approves proposals for facilities

Capital Construction and Facilities

The Commission has two major responsibilities related to capital construction projects at public postsecondary education institutions.

The first responsibility is to review, monitor, and approve or disapprove capital construction projects that use more than \$2 million in tax funds to construct, renovate, or acquire facilities, or more than \$90,000 per year in additional tax funds to operate and maintain. Disapproved projects cannot receive state funds for construction or ongoing operating and maintenance costs. From January 2017 through December 2018, the Commission reviewed 13 capital construction project proposals submitted by the institutions. Of these requests, four proposals were revised to reduce square feet and/or costs, which resulted in a reduction in tax fund expenditures of nearly \$10.5 million and at least \$65,000 per year in tax funds for ongoing operating and maintenance costs.

The second responsibility is to review the biennial capital construction requests of the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, and the

Nebraska State College System. With its statewide perspective, the Commission provides a unified prioritization of all approved capital construction requests for higher education. The Commission makes these recommendations to the Governor and Legislature at the same time it makes recommendations on biennial operating budget requests. The Commission recommends a list, in priority order, of approved capital construction projects eligible for state funding. Only those projects that were approved by the governing boards and the Commission, or the Task Force on Building Renewal, and are requesting state funding in the biennial budget request are considered. The Commission identified ongoing routine maintenance and addressing deferred repair as statewide facilities priorities for the 2019-21 biennium.

The latest full report, *2019-21 Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization*, is available at the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

What does the Commission do?

Reviews the institutions' budget proposals and makes recommendations on those requests to the Governor and Legislature

Budget Review and Recommendations

The Commission has constitutional responsibility to review and modify, if necessary to conform to the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education, the biennial budget requests of Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions and make recommendations on those requests to the Governor and Legislature.

Through this review, the Commission can assure consistency with the *Comprehensive Plan* and promote effective use of state funds in support of public postsecondary education in Nebraska. The Commission reviews budgets and makes its recommendations in October of every even-numbered year.

In fall 2018, the Commission reviewed 14 requests for additional state funding from the University of Nebraska System, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis, the Nebraska State College System, and the community colleges.

Of those 14 requests, one was a new and expanded request for which the Commission recommended new general funds

In addition, there were 13 requests that were part of the continuation budget recommendation. The total dollars for institutional continuation costs and new and expanded requests was \$56,228,387 for the biennium.

The full report, *2019-21 Institutional Operating Budget Recommendations*, is available on the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

Initiatives, Programs, and Updates

Ongoing Initiatives

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is an agreement among member states, districts, and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offerings of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a national council and administered by four regional education compacts. Nebraska was accepted as part of SARA in 2014. The Coordinating Commission is the state's portal agency for the initiative, meaning Nebraska institutions apply to the Commission to participate. As of December 2018, 25 Nebraska colleges and universities had joined SARA. All continue to be active members

Improving Teacher Quality Grant Program

The Improving Teacher Quality State Grant Program provides grants to partnerships comprised of Nebraska institutions of higher education and high-need local educational agencies. The goal is to increase student

academic achievement by helping to ensure that highly qualified teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals have access to sustained and intensive high quality professional development in core academic subjects.

The Improving Teacher Quality program was authorized under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The Every Student Succeeds Act, replacing NCLB, was signed on December 10, 2015. The Improving Teacher Quality program was not included in that legislation. However, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 provided FY 2016 funding for the program. Once all funds are dispersed to the last awardees, the Improving Teacher Quality grants will no longer be available.

In January 2017 the Commission made the final awards. The review panel recommended funding for seven projects, four in science areas, two in writing or language arts, and one in social science. The awards went to partnerships headed by UNL (three awards), UNK (two), Creighton (one), and Wayne State College (one). The amount awarded for all seven projects was \$366,544.

The ITQ program continues to focus on professional development activities for in-service teachers, especially those teaching in shortage areas and those who don't hold an endorsement in the subject area in which they are teaching. In some instances, ITQ funds are awarded for activities that address one or both challenges. Projects that address the needs of low-performing schools or model the use of technology are given priority. For more information about the ITQ program, visit ccpe.nebraska.gov and click on the "Grants" dropdown menu.

Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit

The Coordinating Commission is leading Nebraska's work as part of a 13-state initiative to help military service members, veterans, and their families overcome barriers to earning postsecondary credentials and entering the workforce. The Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC) aims to, among other things, identify effective policies and best practices that can be shared among participating states. Volunteers from state agencies, university systems, college campuses, and other organizations have been working together as part of the initiative. The Coordinating Commission has served as the MCMC facilitator in Nebraska, with a staff member serving on the MCMC steering committee. A recent focus has been to identify ways that Nebraska institutions might award credit to veterans for education or training received while in the military.

FAFSA Completion Initiative

In 2015, the Coordinating Commission began leading an effort in Nebraska to encourage more high school students to apply for federal financial aid to attend college. As part of the U.S. Department of Education's new FAFSA Completion Initiative, the Commission can provide certain designated entities – typically high schools – with limited data about students' progress in completing and filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA Initiative will enable the designated entities to better target counseling, help with completing the FAFSA, and provide other resources to those students. Identifying such students can promote college access and success by ensuring students, particularly low-income students, have access to financial aid. The Commission received funding from the Legislature in 2015 for the implementation of the initiative's software.

Oral Health Training and Services Fund

In 2015, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law LB 661, which established the Oral Health Training and Services Fund. The legislation calls on the Coordinating Commission to administer the fund and contract with postsecondary dental institutions for up to \$8 million in services, with the state requiring a match of 4:1 from non-state sources; i.e., up to \$32 million in matching contributions. The Commission awarded contracts in February 2017.

New to the Commission

The Governor appointed one new Commissioner during the 2017-18 biennium, Dr. Paul Von Behren of Ames. Dr. Von Behren was appointed in October 2017. As of November 2018, there were two Commissioner vacancies.