

NEBRASKA'S



COORDINATING COMMISSION
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

2016 BIENNIAL REPORT

Covering December 2014 to December 2016

APPROVED BY THE COORDINATING COMMISSION

DECEMBER 1, 2016

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This report and others are available at the Coordinating Commission's website:

ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports

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2016 Biennial Report

Provided pursuant to §85-1412 (12) of Nebraska Statutes.

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 12 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 2016 Biennial Report provides an overview of the Coordinating Commission's accomplishments during the past two years.

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 more than \$17 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 \$95 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 the 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 the Introduction and Chapter One of the plan.

Chapter One includes a vision statement for postsecondary education in Nebraska; a section that examines 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, and that individual campuses rank among the five best institutions in peer comparisons.

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) and the Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship 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 2014-15, \$9.5 million of the grant's funding came from State lottery funds and \$6.9 million from the State's general funds. In 2015-16, lottery funding increased to \$10 million, while the general funds appropriation remained \$6.9 million.

Nebraska Opportunity Grant Biennium History:

2014-15:

Total awarded: \$16,455,272

- 15,943 students received a grant (35% of Nebraska Pell Grant-eligible students)
 - Public institutions: 11,504 students
- \$1,000 average award
 - Private, non-profit: 2,950 students
- \$1,067.57 average award
 - Proprietary/for-profit: 1,489 students
- \$1,209.48 average award

Average grant awarded: \$1,032.13

2015-16: (preliminary)

Total awarded: \$16,820,629

- 13,736 students received a grant (33% of Nebraska eligible students)
 - Public institutions: 9,588 students
- \$1,252 average award
 - Private, non-profit: 2,952 students
- \$1,111 average award
 - Proprietary/for-profit: 1,196 students
- \$1,285 average award

Average grant awarded: \$1,225

Access College Early Scholarship Program

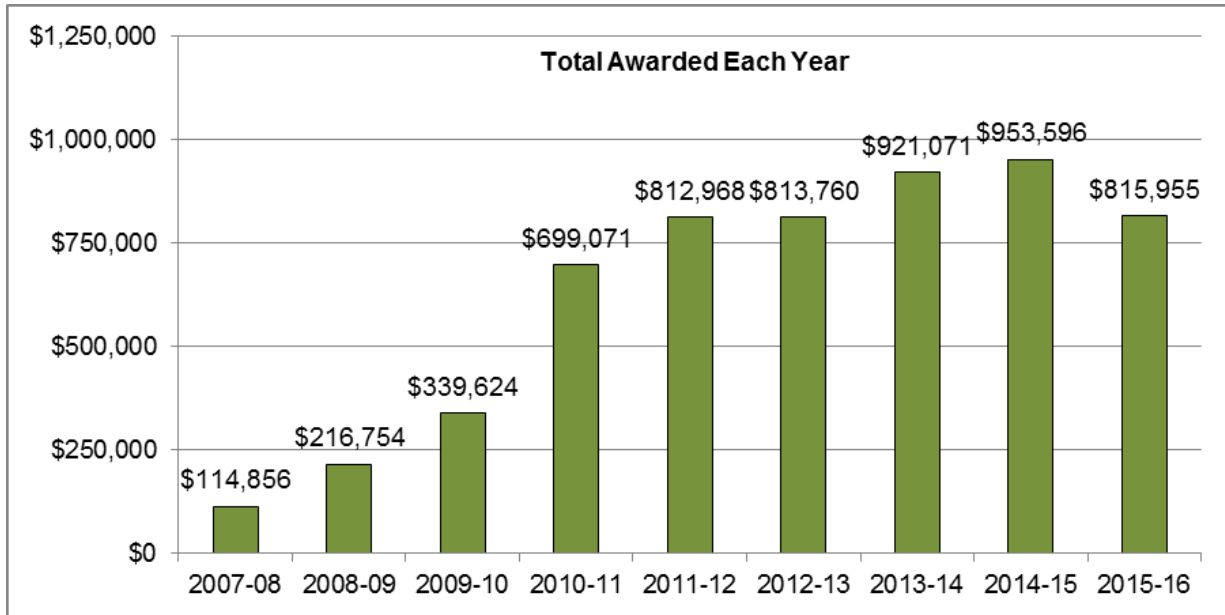
The Access College Early Scholarship Program awards scholarships to high school students from low-income families who enroll in a college course at a participating public or private postsecondary institution while the student is still in high school. The Commission recommended the creation of this program 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 prohibit a student from taking college courses while in high school.

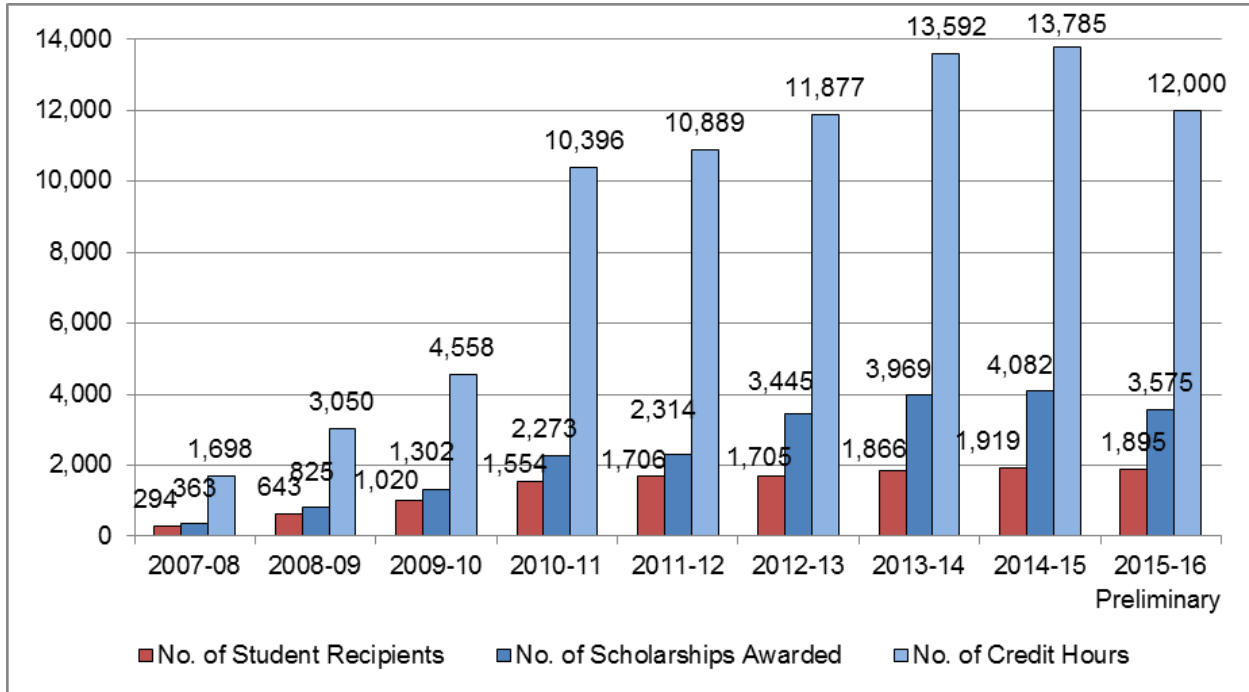
ACE Scholarship Program Funding



(ACE charts continued on next page)

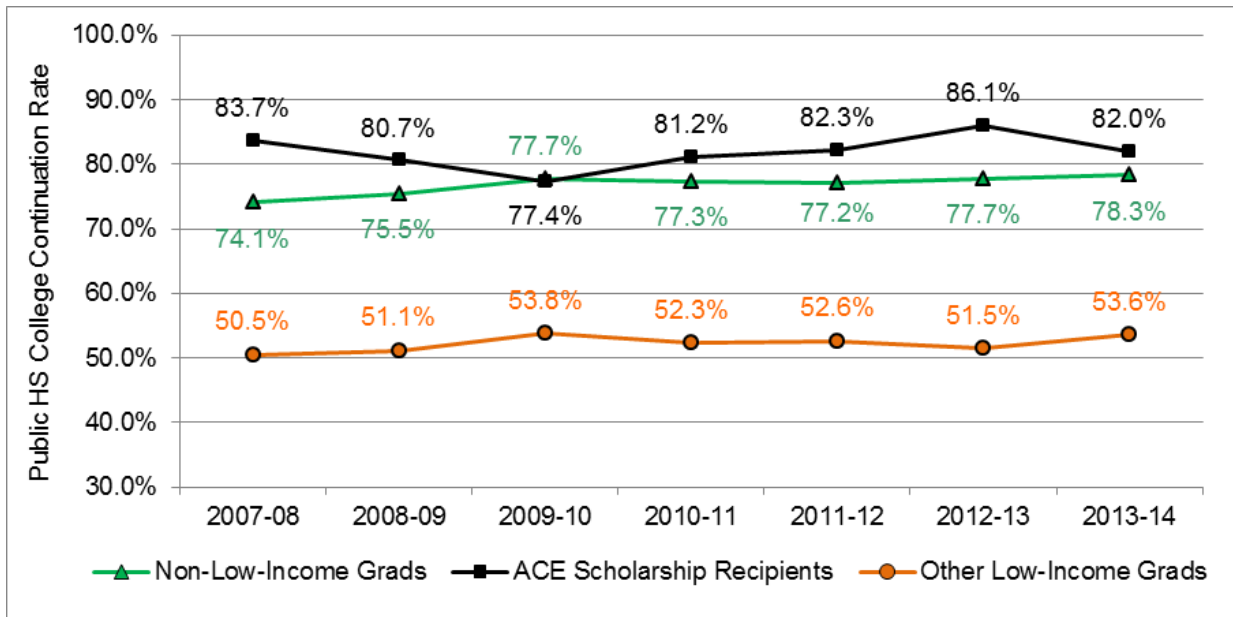
(ACE charts continued)

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 2013-14



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 2017-19 *(October 2016)*

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 14 of this document for more information.*)

Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization for 2017-19 *(October 2016)*

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 13 of this document for more information.*)

Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid Report *(September 2016)*

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 2014-15, Nebraska ranked 32rd among states in need-based student aid grant dollars per full-time undergraduate enrollment, at \$190.62.

Source: 2016 Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid Report

Academic Analyses

Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls *(September 2016)*

This report describes 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. Also, for the first time since 2003, Commission staff reported detailed data on dual enrollment courses offered to Nebraska high school students.

Dashboards

College Continuation Rates *(Last revised June 2016)*

This dashboard provides estimates of college-going rates for each of Nebraska's public high schools that awarded regular high school diplomas in 2007-2008 through 2014-2015.

Degrees and Other Awards *(Last revised August 2016)*

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 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) surveys. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's 2016 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Degrees and Other Awards Conferred 2004-2005 through 2014-2015.

Other Analyses, Publications

Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report (March 2015, 2016)

This statutorily required annual report provides data to the Nebraska Legislature, with comparative statistics to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three key priorities for Nebraska's postsecondary education system. These priorities were developed by the 2003 LR 174 Higher Education Task Force and are 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 (2015, 2016)

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 three sections: Enrollment; Degrees and Other Awards; Faculty and Salaries.

KEY FINDING: The Attainment Gap

“The 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 white non-Hispanics and minorities (i.e., not white non-Hispanic) is the second largest in the nation. In Nebraska, 54% of 25-to-44-year old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate’s degree or higher. In comparison, only 26% of 25-to-44-year old minorities have completed an associate’s degree or higher. Nationally, 46% of 25-to-44-year old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate’s degree or higher. In comparison, only 32% of 25-to-44-year old minorities have completed an associate’s degree or higher.”

— 2016 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report, pg. II

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 2015-16 biennium, the Commission reviewed 417 existing programs. Of those, 293 were approved to continue and 124 were discontinued by the institutions.

The Commission also reviewed 14 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 33 proposals for new academic programs and organizational units at public institutions. Another 63 proposed programs were reviewed and determined to be reasonable and moderate extensions of existing programs, thus requiring no action by the Commission.

Did you know?

Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions offered 10,088 online courses in 2014-15, compared to 3,106 in 2004-05.

Source: Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls (2016)

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, provide the rules and regulations for implementing the Postsecondary Institution Act. These rules received final State approval in November 2014.

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

Hope International University
(Fullerton, Cal.)

In March 2016, Hope was approved to establish a branch campus at Nebraska Christian College in LaVista and to offer an associate of arts degree in Christian Ministry; bachelor of arts degrees in Family Life and Care Ministry, Pastoral Ministry, Intercultural Ministry, and Next Generation Ministry; and a bachelor of arts in Music and Worship Arts.

In addition, 43 new programs or courses, and one new campus, were approved for institutions previously authorized 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 2015 through December 2016, the Commission reviewed nine capital construction project proposals submitted by the institutions. Of these requests, one renovation proposal was revised to reduce the number of classrooms and create 11,825 gross square feet of shell space, which resulted in a \$1,308,200 reduction in its state appropriation request.

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 both the 2015-17 and 2017-19 biennium.

The latest full report, *2017-2019 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 2016, the Commission reviewed 37 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 37 requests, 16 were new and expanded requests. The Commission:

- Recommended some new general funds for 15 of the requests;
- Recommended no new general funds for one request;

In addition, there were 17 requests that were part of the continuation budget recommendation, and four requests for new building openings. The total dollars for institutional continuation costs and new and expanded requests was \$75,979,790 for the biennium.

The full report, *2017-2019 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 2016, 25 Nebraska colleges and universities had joined SARA.

Improving Teacher Quality grant program

The Commission continues to award Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) federal grants to Nebraska's innovative leaders in education. The grants are funded under the federal Elementary and Secondary

Education Act, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act (Title IIA). Grants are not awarded to individuals, but to partnerships formed by local, high-need educational agencies and a Nebraska college or university. These partnerships design and produce professional development activities to improve the skills of K-12 teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals.

For 2014-15, a review panel selected funding for two projects in mathematics, one in world languages, two in social studies, and one in STEM. The total amount of funds available to Nebraska for awards in 2014-15 was \$275,855. The total amount awarded for the six projects that received funding was \$276,114. The additional money awarded came from unused funds the previous year. For 2015-16, a review panel awarded funding for one project in writing, one in mathematics, one in engineering, and one in science. The total amount of funds available to Nebraska for awards in 2015-16 was \$293,324. The total amount awarded for the four projects that received funding was \$252,522. The remaining funds were made available for projects that may have had more participant applicants than slots funded or other unexpected costs.

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.

New Initiatives and Programs

Community College Gap Assistance Program

The Legislature in 2015 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 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.

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.

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 began work on a Request For Proposals in 2015, which was released in July 2016. Funds are expected to be awarded in early 2017.

Updated peer groups

The Coordinating Commission in 2015 approved updated peer groups for the University of Nebraska's four institutions — the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska at Omaha, University of Nebraska at Kearney, and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. This is an important process not only for the Commission and its work, but for the institutions as well. State statutes and the state's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education* require the Commission to provide a list of peer institutions for each of Nebraska's 13 public postsecondary institutions. The Commission uses peer groups for budget and academic

program review, as well as for other comparisons that aid in Commission decision-making. The institutions often use their peer groups in similar ways as the Commission — for example, to compare academic offerings, enrollment trends, and funding.

New to the Commission

The Governor appointed one new Commissioner during the 2016 biennium, Gwenn Aspen of Omaha. The Legislature must confirm all appointees. Aspen awaits confirmation, as she was appointed when the Legislature was not in session.

Phased-out programs and initiatives

ACE Plus

The Commission initiated the ACE Plus Scholarship Program in 2010, with the first year of awards in academic year 2011-2012. The program was discontinued after the 2015-16 academic year, as the federal grant that funded the program was no longer available. This scholarship program picked up where the ACE program ends, by providing scholarships to college students who previously received an ACE scholarship. The main objective was to encourage former ACE students to attend college full time after high school and to help them complete a postsecondary credential. The ACE Plus program provided a \$500 award for a student's freshman year and a \$1,000 scholarship award for their sophomore year. In 2014-2015, the

Commission awarded \$283,000 to 377 students; in 2015-16, \$242,500 to 327 students. ACE Plus recipients not only performed well in high school but also found success in their first year of college. When ACE Plus recipients completed their first year in college in 2015-16, 81% of them earned above a 3.0 college GPA, with 59% earning grades in the GPA range of 3.5-4.0. Data also showed a high percentage of first-year ACE Plus awardees who returned to college for their second year:

Class of 2010: 94%

Class of 2011: 93%

Class of 2012: 95%

Class of 2013: 98%

Furthermore, from the ACE Plus awardee high school class of 2011, 84% either earned a college degree or were still enrolled in fall 2015.

College Access Challenge Grant Program

The Coordinating Commission acted as the State's administrator of the federal College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACG), which ended in 2015. The CACG was a five-year formula grant program designed to increase the number of underrepresented students who enter and remain in postsecondary education. In FY 2014, the Coordinating Commission received \$1.4 million in federal grant funds for the CACG. The Commission used these funds to support many Nebraska groups and initiatives, including: the Access College Early grant program; the ACE Plus scholarship program; Central Plains Center for Services, in western Nebraska; Omaha

Public Schools; EducationQuest Foundation, based in Lincoln; Ho-Chunk Community Development Corp., which is affiliated with the Winnebago Tribe; Nebraska Methodist College; Valentine Public High School; Scottsbluff Public High School; and Chase County Public Schools.