

COMMISSION UPDATE

News from Nebraska's Coordinating Commission
for Postsecondary Education (CCPE)



DECEMBER 2015 — ISSUE 10

CALENDAR

JANUARY 6

First day of 2016
[Legislative session](#)

JANUARY 21

[Commission meeting](#),
Creighton University,
Omaha

MARCH 10

[Commission meeting](#),
University of
Nebraska at Kearney

COMMISSIONERS

Chair:

Carol Zink,

At-large, Lincoln

Vice Chair:

W. Scott Wilson,

District 4, Papillion

Colleen Adam,

District 5, Hastings

Dr. John Bernthal,

District 1, Lincoln

Dr. Deborah Frison,

District 2, Omaha

Dr. Ron Hunter,

District 6,

Hay Springs

Mary Lauritzen,

At-large, West Point

Dwayne Probyn,

At-large, Papillion

Eric Seacrest,

At-large, North

Platte

Dr. Joyce Simmons,

At-large, Valentine

Lori Warner,

District 3, South

Sioux City

Military initiative gains momentum

The Coordinating Commission organized a meeting recently of Nebraska stakeholders in a multi-state initiative to help military members, veterans and their families earn college credit and enter the workforce.

The Commission is leading Nebraska's efforts as part of the [Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit](#). Thirteen Midwestern states are participating in the initiative, which is administered by the Midwest-ern Higher Education Compact and funded through a grant from the Lumina Foundation.



Dr. Kathleen Fimple, the Commission's Academic Programs Officer, facilitated the Nebraska meeting, held Nov. 19 at Central Community College. More than 20 people attended, representing postsecondary institutions, the Nebraska Department of Education, the Legislature, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and business leaders.

The full agenda and other meeting information is available on the Commission [website](#).

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

Jill Heese,
Research
Coordinator



WHEN YOU STARTED AT CCPE: Oct. 1, 2013

JOB DESCRIPTION: I tell people I analyze "all things higher ed." My main responsibilities are focused on producing reports and other publications that analyze higher ed topics, from enrollment trends to graduation rates.

BACKGROUND: I grew up in Columbus and graduated from O'Neill High School. I re-

ceived my associate's degree from Southeast CC, my bachelor's degree from UNL (both in business administration), and my master's degree from UNL (survey research and methodology). Prior to joining the Commission, I worked at UNMC for nearly a decade in numerous research/analytical roles.

MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR JOB: I love working with data and "telling the stories" of Nebraska's students and higher education institutions.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING: I compete in amateur boxing and am an avid runner, so most of my nights are spent training at the gym and running outside. I'm also a volunteer with the American Cancer Society and the proud mom of two adorable Pekingese dogs, Lulu and Madeline.

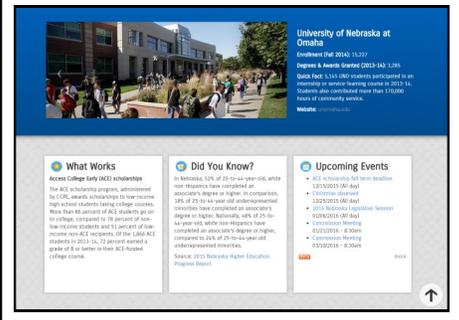


CCPE unveils new website

The Commission recently launched a new website with a new URL: cpe.nebraska.gov

Among its many features, the new site includes an updated design, streamlined Reports and News sections, cell phone and tablet compatibility, and "select language" and "enlarge text" functions.

Please update your bookmarks and links as necessary.



CCPE leads the way in state FAFSA effort

The Coordinating Commission is 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 timely completion of a FAFSA is an essential step for many families in obtaining financial aid. The U.S. Department of Education reports that less than 55 percent of seniors complete the FAFSA. Meanwhile, studies show a 25-30 percent increase in the likelihood of low-income students starting college if they complete the FAFSA.

The FAFSA Initiative will enable the designated entities to better target

counseling, filing help, and 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. More information on the initiative is available on the Commission [website](#).

Commission releases annual reports on financial aid programs

The Commission's Financial Aid Officer, J. Ritchie Morrow, presented year-end reports for the [Access College Early](#) (ACE) and [Nebraska Opportunity Grant](#) (NOG) scholarship programs at the Dec. 3 CCPE meeting. ACE pays for low-income high school students to take dual-credit courses; NOG provides financial aid to low-income Nebraska college students. Below are highlights from each.

ACE (2014-15)

Total funds awarded: \$953,596 (\$681,706 General funds; \$271,890 federal grant)
Students: 1,919
High schools represented: 211
Scholarships awarded: 4,082 (students can receive multiple scholarships to pay for multiple courses)
Average scholarship award: \$233.67
Students who earned a B or better in ACE course: 76%

NOG (2014-15)

Total funds: \$16.4 million (\$9.5 million Lottery funds; \$6.9 million General funds)
Students: 15,943
Students by sector: 41% community college; 24% NU; 19% independents; 9% private career schools; 7% State Colleges
Average grant: \$1,032
Students who qualified but did not receive a grant due to lack of funds: Roughly 30,000

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: DATA DASHBOARDS

The Coordinating Commission is the only entity in Nebraska that conducts in-depth, statewide analyses of higher education issues. As part of that work, the Commission recently posted on its website two interactive data dashboards.

One dashboard features data on [college continuation rates](#) in Nebraska, while the other focuses on the information presented in the [Degrees and Other Awards](#) section of the *2015 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska*.

Visit the CCPE website for a [full list](#) of reports and analyses produced by the Commission.

Seacrest honored for 29 years of service

The Coordinating Commission on Dec. 3 paid tribute to Eric Seacrest of North Platte, who is stepping down from his role as a Commissioner after nearly



30 years of service. At the Commission's morning meeting, Chair Carol Zink presented Seacrest with a framed [resolution](#) that conferred on him the title of Honorary Commissioner Emeritus. After the

meeting, the Commission held a luncheon in his honor. Seacrest has served on the Commission since 1986, making him the longest tenured Commissioner in

history.

He has served on every Commission committee, as chair of the Commission on multiple occasions, and has led numerous Commission projects and initiatives.