

# COMMISSION UPDATE

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



MARCH 2017 — ISSUE 13

## CALENDAR

**APRIL 27**

[Commission meeting](#),  
Fremont

**JUNE 2**

Final day of 2017  
Legislative session

**JUNE 15**

[Commission meeting](#),  
Apothecary Building,  
Lincoln

## COMMISSIONERS

*Chair:*

**Carol Zink**,

At-large, Lincoln

*Vice Chair:*

**W. Scott Wilson**,

At-large,  
Plattsmouth

**Colleen Adam**,

District 5, Hastings

**Gwenn Aspen**,

At-large, Omaha

**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**,

District 4, Papillion

**Dr. Joyce Simmons**,

At-large, Lincoln

*Note: The District 3  
seat is open. Those  
interested can apply*

[online](#).

**Research Spotlight:** *Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report*

## Report shines light on issues facing state higher education

The Coordinating Commission at its March 16 meeting approved the 2017 [Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report](#). The Commission is required by statute to produce the report, which provides detailed trend data and analysis of Nebraska's progress toward reaching educational attainment goals established by the Legislature in 2003. The report includes sections on high school graduation rates; college continuation rates; college preparedness; postsecondary enrollment and graduation rates; and financial aid.

The report's findings indicate that more work must be done for Nebraskans to enroll in college and complete degrees. The Commission recently updated the [Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education](#) and identified opportunities at the high school, postsecondary, and state government levels to address areas that will lead to improvements in educational attainment and workforce readiness.

The Commission is the only entity in the state that gathers, analyzes, and reports on postsecondary data from all sectors. The *Progress Report*, and other Commission reports, are often cited by state legislators and higher education leaders.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

**31.7** — Percentage of Nebraskans ages 22 to 64 who have a bachelor's degree or higher for the period 2011-2015.

**71.0** — College continuation rate for the 2014-2015 Nebraska public high school graduating class.

**70.7** — For every 10,000 working-age (22 to 64) Nebraskans with a bachelor's degree or higher, there was an average annual net out-migration of 70.7 people from 2011 to 2015.

**26.3** — Percentage difference in college attainment between whites and minorities ages 25 to 44, which ranks second highest in the country.

## Legislative bill calls on CCPE to enforce law protecting students at for-profit schools

Coordinating Commission Executive Director Mike Baumgartner recently [testified](#) in favor of a bill in the Legislature that would help protect Nebraska college students who attend a for-profit institution that goes out of business. He made his comments at a hearing before the Education Committee.

[LB 123](#), introduced by Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks of Lincoln, would establish the Guaranty Recovery Cash Fund. This fund would require that for-profit colleges and universities with a physical presence

in Nebraska contribute to a fund that would be used primarily to reimburse students attending these schools if they go out of business.

The Commission would administer the fund. Currently there are three schools in Nebraska that fall under this for-profit category: Kaplan University in Lincoln and Omaha; the Creative Center, in Omaha; and National American University's Bellevue campus.

The Education Committee last week voted to advance the bill to the full Legislature.

# Financial aid programs serve thousands of needy students

The State of Nebraska's two financial aid programs targeted at low-income students continue to help thousands of students earn college credit and degrees. The [Nebraska Opportunity Grant](#) (NOG) provides scholarships to low-income Nebraska college students; the [Access College Early](#) (ACE) program pays for low-income high school students to take college courses. The Coordinating Commission administers both programs and recently published [2015-16 year-end reports](#).

## ACE (2015-16)

**Total funds awarded:** \$814,910

**Students:** 1,894

**High schools represented:** 204

**Scholarships awarded:** 3,575 (students can receive multiple scholarships to pay for multiple courses)

**Average scholarship award:** \$227.95

**Percent of grades earned by students that were a B or better:** 76

**College credits earned:** 12,194.5

**Students who applied for a scholarship but did not receive one due to a lack of funds:** Roughly 600

*Note: For the 2014-15 public high school graduating class, 82% of ACE recipients went on to college vs. 52% of low-income non-ACE students.*

## NOG (2015-16)

**Total funds:** \$16.9 million (\$10 million Lottery funds; \$6.9 million General funds)

**Students:** 13,739

**Students by sector:** 33% community college; 29% NU; 21% independents; 9% private career schools; 8% State Colleges

**Average grant:** \$1,225

**Students by family income:** 42%, 0-\$19,999; 28%, \$20,000-\$39,999; 30%, \$40,000+

**Students who qualified but did not receive a grant due to lack of funds:** Roughly 30,000

*Note: Nebraska ranks 34th in the country in state-funded, need-based aid per full-time equivalent student.*

## Legislature confirms newest commissioner

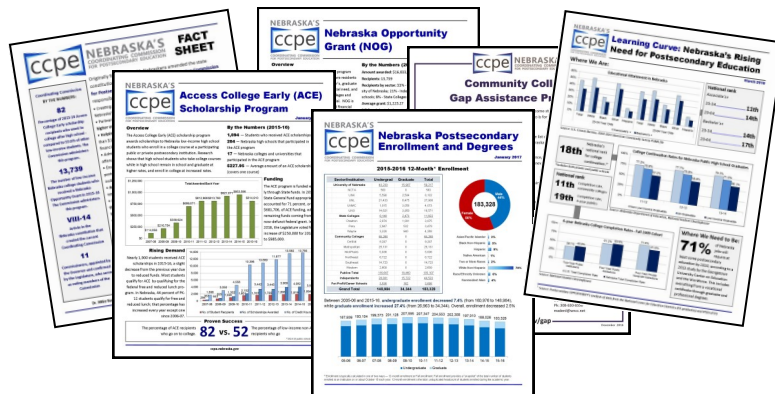
The Legislature on March 6 confirmed the newest member of the Coordinating Commission's governing board. Gwenn Aspen of Omaha fills an at-large commissioner vacancy. The Education Committee had voted 8-0 to forward her nomination to the full Legislature. Aspen, like all commissioners, was appointed by the governor. The Commission is governed by an 11-member board of commissioners — one each from the state's six [Supreme Court judicial districts](#) and five at-large.



Aspen and her husband started Certified Property Management in 2006 and currently she presides over quality control. She is a member of the board of Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance and was the 2014 recipient of the Omaha Healthy Homes Award for her work in safe and healthy housing. Aspen is a native of Michigan and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan.

## Commission testifies on proposed budget cuts for 2017-2019 biennium

The Coordinating Commission [testified](#) before the Appropriations Committee on Feb. 28 and made the case for reducing the committee's preliminary recommendation of an 11.7% cut to the Commission's 2017-18 administrative budget and a 10.1% cut in 2018-19. The committee did recommend increased spending authority for the Nebraska Opportunity Grant — enough to allow 400 more students each year of the biennium to receive a grant. The committee also restored funding for the Access College Early scholarship program to \$985,000 each year. The committee is required to introduce its main budget bill by April 24.



## CCPE CONTINUES TO REVISE, EXPAND SERIES OF FACT SHEETS

The Coordinating Commission produces a series of one-page fact sheets that offer an overview of various programs, topics, and issues relevant to Nebraska higher education. For printable PDFs, visit the Commission's [website](#).