

COMMISSION UPDATE

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



OCTOBER 2016 — ISSUE 12

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 13

[Commission meeting,](#)

State Capitol, Lincoln

DECEMBER 1

[Commission meeting,](#)

Apothecary Building, Lincoln

COMMISSIONERS

Chair:

Carol Zink,

At-large, Lincoln

Vice Chair:

W. Scott Wilson,

District 4, Papillion

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,

At-large, Papillion

Dr. Joyce Simmons,

At-large, Lincoln

Note: The District 3 seat is open. Those interested can apply [online](#).

Financial aid program focuses on high-need occupations

A new financial aid program for low-income community college students is up and running—and already generating strong interest.

The goal of the Community College Gap Assistance Program is to address workforce shortages in high-need occupations in Nebraska, as well as to train those already employed in these in-demand areas and increase their advancement potential. Community colleges can award financial aid to students taking non-credit courses that could lead to jobs in one of these occupations.

The Coordinating Commission administers the program, which

is funded through revenue from the Nebraska State Lottery. The program will receive 9 percent of the available lottery funds set aside for education every year, which equates to about \$1.4 million for fiscal year 2016-17.

Sen. Kate Bolz of Lincoln championed [legislation](#) that created the program in 2015.

As of Oct. 12, the state's six community colleges had identified 262 academic programs for which students can receive Gap funds. Two examples: The Certified Pharmacy Technician Exam Preparation program at North-east Community College, and the Six Sigma Green Belt Certification

Training program at Southeast Community College. Both programs already have enrolled students. The Pharmacy Technician program is for students working toward their pharm tech certification. The class runs for five weeks on Sunday evenings, to accommodate work schedules. The nine-week program at Southeast provides comprehensive training in Six Sigma and prepares students for leadership positions in multiple industries, including manufacturing, education and health. More information on the Gap program, including a list of eligible academic programs, is available on the CCPE [website](#).



WHEN YOU STARTED AT CCPE: 2012

JOB DESCRIPTION: I assist the Executive Director and staff with a wide variety of projects and tasks. I am responsible for coordinating the logistical details for Commission meetings, assembling and distribution of the agenda, clerking the meetings, and preparing minutes for permanent record.

BACKGROUND: I grew up near David City and graduated from Aquinas High School. After

moving to Lincoln I worked in medical offices for over 30 years. My husband Ron and I have been married for 38 years and have three daughters and two grandsons. I attended night classes at Doane College – Lincoln Campus for six years, graduating with a BA in Business Administration in 1999.

MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR JOB: I love coming to work because of the people — a small group of staff and Commissioners with a huge commitment to education. I enjoy visiting higher-education institutions throughout Nebraska where Commission meetings are held.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING: I work part time at Kohl's Department Store and have a home-based business selling Tastefully Simple products with two of my daughters. I enjoy traveling, time with family and friends, and especially spoiling my grandsons.

Commission approves changes to state higher education plan

The Coordinating Commission at its July 21 meeting approved revisions to the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education. The state Commission directs the Commission to adopt, and revise as needed, a comprehensive plan for postsecondary education in Nebraska. The current comprehensive plan is the Commission's second. It was adopted in 2000 after the Legislature called for a review and revision of the Commission's first comprehensive plan, approved in 1992.

The revisions approved in July cover the plan's Introduction and Chapter One, which serve as the foundation for the rest of the document. Chapter One includes a vision statement for postsec-

ondary 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 nation-

al rankings, and that individual campuses rank among the five best institutions in peer comparisons. The Commission presented the revisions to the Legislature's Education Committee during a hearing on Sept. 20. The entire report is available on the CCPE [website](#).

Excerpt from Major Statewide Goals section, pg. 1-8:

"Nebraska will close the historical educational attainment gaps between majority and underrepresented populations and be among the leading states in overall educational attainment."

Governor appoints Aspen to commission

Gov. Pete Ricketts has appointed a new commissioner to serve on the board of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. Gwenn Aspen of Omaha fills an at-large commissioner vacancy.



Aspen and her husband started Certified Property Management in 2006 and currently she presides over quality control at the company. While the business was getting off the ground, Aspen worked in sales at Sanofi-Aventis. Prior to that she worked at Cerner Corporation in Kansas City. 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 graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: DELIVERING COURSES BEYOND CAMPUS WALLS

The Coordinating Commission recently published its annual report about postsecondary distance education in Nebraska. [Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls](#) reports on distance education courses offered at the state's public institutions. For the first time since 2003, CCPE staff reported detailed data on dual enrollment courses offered to Nebraska high school students. The report also includes data on any courses that are not online but are not offered at an institution's primary campus or a branch campus — by two-way video, for example.

The Coordinating Commission is the only entity in the state that focuses its research efforts on postsecondary education in Nebraska. Visit the Commission website for a [full list](#) of reports and analyses.

Key Findings:

- Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions (University of Nebraska, State College System, community colleges) offered 10,088 online courses in 2014-15; they offered 3,016 in 2004-05.
- There were 152,461 student enrollments in online courses in 2014-15. (Some students took more than one course and were therefore counted more than once.)
- In 2014-15 the community colleges offered nearly 59 percent of the dual enrollment courses offered to high school students and served 60 percent of the students. Southeast Community College offered the most courses, 256, followed by Northeast Community College, with 243, and Metropolitan Community College, with 242.
- Of all the institutions, the University of Nebraska at Omaha offered by far the most dual enrollment courses — 589.