

COMMISSION UPDATE

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



APRIL 2016 — ISSUE 11

CALENDAR

APRIL 28

[Commission meeting](#),

Bellevue University,
Bellevue

JUNE 9

[Commission meeting](#),

Southeast
Community College,
Lincoln

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

Lori Warner,

District 3,

South Sioux City

Dr. Ron Hunter,

District 6,

Hay Springs

Mary Lauritzen,

At-large, West Point

Dwayne Probyn,

At-large, Papillion

Dr. Joyce Simmons,

At-large, Valentine

Note: One at-large

seat is open. Inter-
ested parties can

apply [online](#).

Legislation provides more funding for ACE program

Low-income high school students taking dual-credit courses will benefit from a \$250,000 increase in funding for the [Access College Early](#) (ACE) scholarship program.

The Legislature passed and Gov. Pete Ricketts signed into law legislation that included the funding increase, which is for the 2016-17 academic year.

The ACE appropriation was part of the Legislature's larger mid-biennium adjust bill, [LB 956](#).

With the increase, ACE funding for 2016-17 will be \$985,000, an increase from \$735,000 in State funds for 2015-16.

The funding increase originated from a bill, [LB 713](#), that called

for a \$2.79 million increase in ACE funding. Sen. John Stinner of Gering introduced the bill.

The Coordinating Commission administers the ACE program, which was created in 2007. ACE scholarships are awarded to low-income high school students who are dually or co-enrolled in a college course at a participating public or private postsecondary institution. Most students qualify through the free or reduced lunch program.

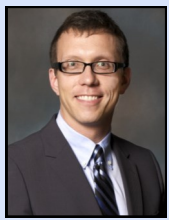
In 2015, the Legislature added criteria, through [LB 525](#), to include students taking dual-enrollment courses as part of a career plan of study, often through a career academy.

More than 1,900 students received ACE scholarships in 2014-15. Of those students, 76 percent received a grade of B or better in their ACE-funded college course. Eighty-two percent of ACE students go on to college, compared to 78 percent of non-low-income students and 54 percent of low-income non-ACE recipients.

Demand for ACE scholarships continues to grow. The Commission has already awarded scholarships to nearly 1,900 students to date, with additional funds still remaining. The number of ACE recipients has increased every year since the program's inception.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

**Jason Keese,
Communications
Coordinator**



WHEN YOU STARTED AT CCPE: July 2009

JOB DESCRIPTION: Three primary areas: CCPE website content; media and legislative relations; writing and editing a variety of print and digital materials.

BACKGROUND: Born and raised in Iowa—Go Hawks! — I moved to Nebraska in 1999, along

with my wife, Shari. Prior to joining the Commission, I worked in the Marketing and Public Relations Department at Bellevue University. I studied Journalism and English at Drake University in Des Moines. After graduating, I worked at various newspapers in upstate New York and Nebraska. I have two daughters, ages 11 and 14.

MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR JOB: There's plenty to love but the most rewarding part of my job—hands down—is the people I work with.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING: If it's before 6 a.m., I'm probably running. During more sane hours of the day I enjoy spending time with my family, cooking, and watching sports.

Process begins to update state's higher ed plan

The Coordinating Commission is undertaking a review of Nebraska's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*, which is authorized in Article VII, section 14 of the Nebraska Constitution and elaborated at length in Neb. Rev. Stat. 85-1413.

The Commission began the review with chapter one, which assesses the postsecondary educational needs of the state, states the shared values and beliefs underlying the plan, and lays out major statewide goals. The Commission developed a review draft to solicit comments and suggestions from the public postsecondary institutions and other interested parties. That document, as well as the current version of chapter one, are available on the Commission [website](#).

The Commission believes that the plan adopted in 2000 and subsequently revised on occasion is fundamentally sound,

but both Nebraska and postsecondary education have changed significantly over the past 15 years.

The proposed updates to chapter one are intended to reflect and address those changes, particularly the continuing diversification of Nebraska's population, the growing necessity of completing postsecondary credentials to meet employer needs and expectations, the rise in student debt, the ubiquity of technology in postsecondary education, and pressure to demonstrate the value of postsecondary education to students and taxpayers.

At the same time, the proposed revisions reaffirm the many strengths of Nebraska's postsecondary institutions and the trust that Nebraskans place in their colleges and universities.

The Commission is seeking public comment by May 20, 2016. A public hearing is scheduled for May 31 at the State Capitol.

Commission testifies in favor of student debt literacy bill

CCPE Executive Director Dr. Mike Baumgartner [testified](#) at a January public hearing in favor of a Legislative bill ([LB 726](#)) that calls for the state's public postsecondary institutions to provide students detailed annual information regarding their student loan debt.

The Legislature ultimately passed the bill, which Gov. Pete Ricketts signed into law April 6.

The required information will include the student's debt level, monthly repayment amount, and how long it will take to pay off their loans. The bill's introducer, Sen. Kate Sullivan, and her staff consulted with the Commission when drafting the bill.

Nebraska becomes one of the first states in the country to pass such legislation.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: 2016 PROGRESS REPORT

The Coordinating Commission is the only entity in Nebraska that conducts in-depth, statewide analyses of higher education issues. The Commission recently published the [2016 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report](#), which provides the Legislature with comparative statistics to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving priorities, identified by the Legislature in 2003, for Nebraska's postsecondary education system.

The CCPE research staff produces the 384-page report. They are: Jill Heese, Research Coordinator; Dr. Duncan Hsu, Database Manager/Special Projects; and James Schiltz, Data Analyst.

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

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. 11