

**NEBRASKA'S**



**COORDINATING COMMISSION  
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

# **2024 BIENNIAL REPORT**

**Covering Calendar Years 2023 and 2024**

**Executive Committee approval November 21, 2024**

**To be ratified by the Commission December 13, 2024**

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*This report and others are available at the Coordinating Commission's website:*  
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**NEBRASKA'S**  
 COORDINATING COMMISSION  
 FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

## 2024 Biennial Report

*Provided pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1412 (9)*

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 ten employees on the Commission’s staff, making it one of the smallest agencies of its kind in the country.

The 2024 Biennial Report provides an overview of the Coordinating Commission’s accomplishments during 2023 and 2024.

<b>THE COORDINATING COMMISSION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and putting into action a comprehensive statewide plan to guide Nebraska’s higher education system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approving or disapproving academic programs based on specific criteria: need, demand, unnecessary duplication, resources, and cost.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnering with Legislators to develop innovative and results-driven higher education policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembling and analyzing statewide data and publishing reports tied to the state’s higher education goals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping low-income Nebraska students attend college by awarding over \$26 million in need-based financial aid annually.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering roughly \$367 million in annual state appropriations to Nebraska’s six community colleges.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the Community College Gap Assistance Program, which offers financial aid to students in high-need fields.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorizing the operation of out-of-state and new Nebraska postsecondary institutions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the Excellence in Teaching Act, the Nebraska Career Scholarships for community colleges and independent institutions, and the Door to College Scholarship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saving Nebraska colleges and universities thousands of dollars through administration of a nationwide distance learning agreement.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	

*What does the Commission do?*

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**Implements a statewide, comprehensive plan to guide  
Nebraska's higher education system, in collaboration  
with the state's colleges and universities**

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***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 LB816 in 1999, which called for a review and revision of the Commission's first comprehensive plan approved in June 1992. The most recent revision of the *Comprehensive Plan* occurred in 2022 as the result of the adoption of LR335, which created a state educational attainment goal. The full plan is available on the Commission's website, [ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports](https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports).

*What does the Commission do?*

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**Administers student financial aid programs**

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## **Financial Aid**

The Commission's financial aid administration responsibilities increased considerably in 2024. Along with the Nebraska Opportunity Grant (NOG), the Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program, and the Community College Gap Assistance Program, the Commission began administering the following programs on July 1, 2024:

- The Excellence in Teaching Act, a forgivable loan program formerly administered by the Nebraska Department of Education that consists of the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program, the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program, and the new Attracting Excellence to Teaching – Student Teacher Loan;
- Nebraska Career Scholarships for the community colleges and the independent, not-for-profit colleges and universities, which were formerly administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development;
- The Door to College Scholarship, a new program; and
- The Career-Readiness and Dual-Credit Education Grant Program, a new 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 is awarded to students in consultation with financial aid administrators at Nebraska's postsecondary institutions. These grants are awarded to undergraduate students who are residents of Nebraska, attend a Nebraska postsecondary institution, and have a qualifying Student Aid Index (SAI) as determined by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

In 2022-23, \$16.3 million of the grant's funding came from State lottery funds and \$7.6 million from the State's general fund. In 2023-24, lottery funds remained at \$16.3 million while the general fund appropriation increased to \$8.1 million.

## Nebraska Opportunity Grant Biennium History:

### 2022-23

**Total awarded: \$23,928,266**

13,183 students received a grant (46.5% of eligible students)

Public institutions: 10,170 students  
\$1,717 average award

Private, non-profit: 2,309 students  
\$1,843 average award

Proprietary/for-profit: 290 students  
\$2,085 average award

**Average grant awarded: \$1,815**

### 2023-24:

**Total awarded: \$24,416,074**

13,507 students received a grant (44.1% of eligible students)

Public institutions: 10,863 students  
\$1,809 average award

Private, non-profit: 2,362 students  
\$1,752 average award

Proprietary/for-profit: 282 students  
\$2,047 average award

**Average grant awarded: \$1,808**

## Access College Early Scholarship Program

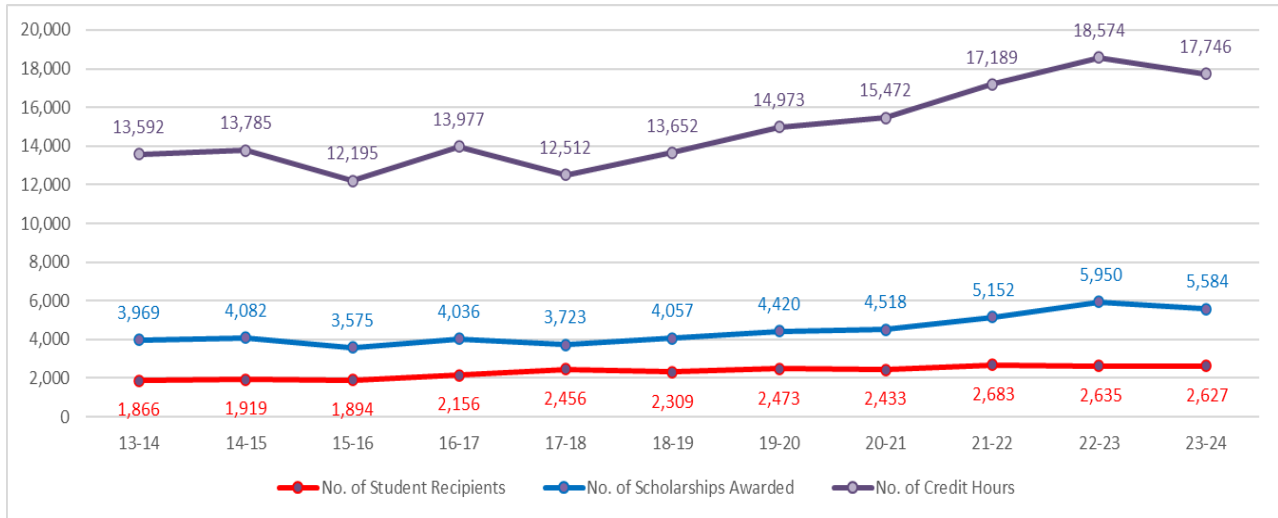
The Access College Early Scholarship Program awards scholarships to high school students from low-income families who enroll in a college course at a participating public or private postsecondary institution while the student is still in high school. The Commission recommended the creation of this program in 2007, funding it through the transfer of funds from a relatively inactive program, the Community Scholarship Foundation Program, to the ACE program. The program is entirely funded from state General Funds now.

Current national research indicates that high school students who take college courses while in high school:

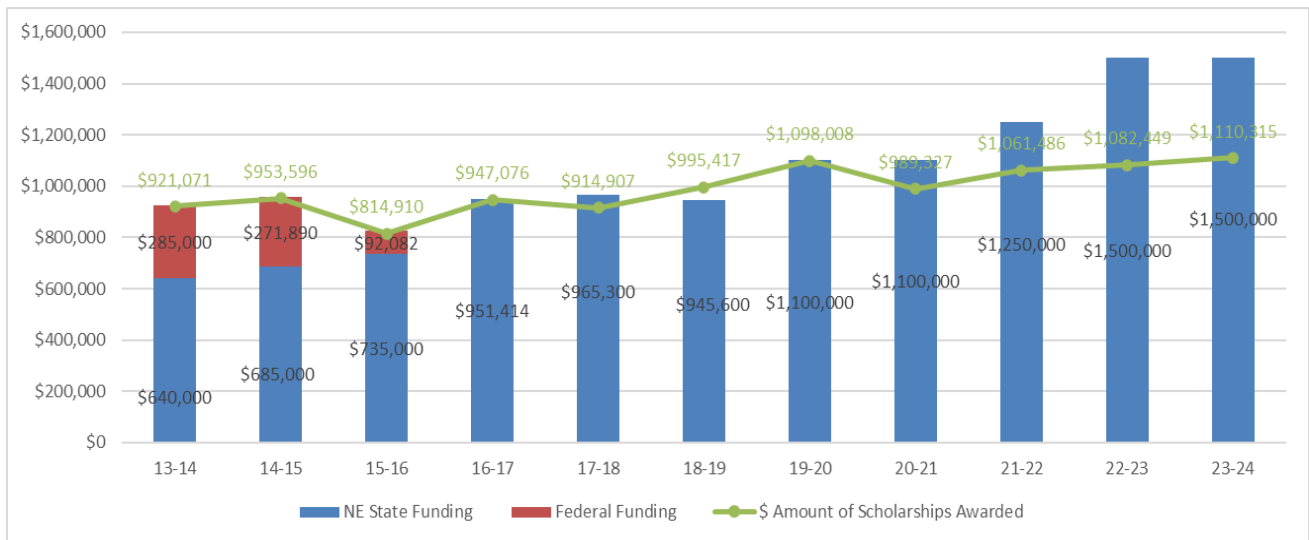
- Increase academic rigor during high school;
- Remain in school and graduate at higher rates;
- Enroll in college at an increased rate;
- Streamline their transitions from high school to college;
- Have a head start on their chosen postsecondary programs;
- Save money once in college; and
- Return for their college sophomore years at higher rates.

The Commission believes family income should not exclude a student from taking college courses while in high school.

## ACE Scholarship Program Funding and Awards 2013-14 through 2023-24

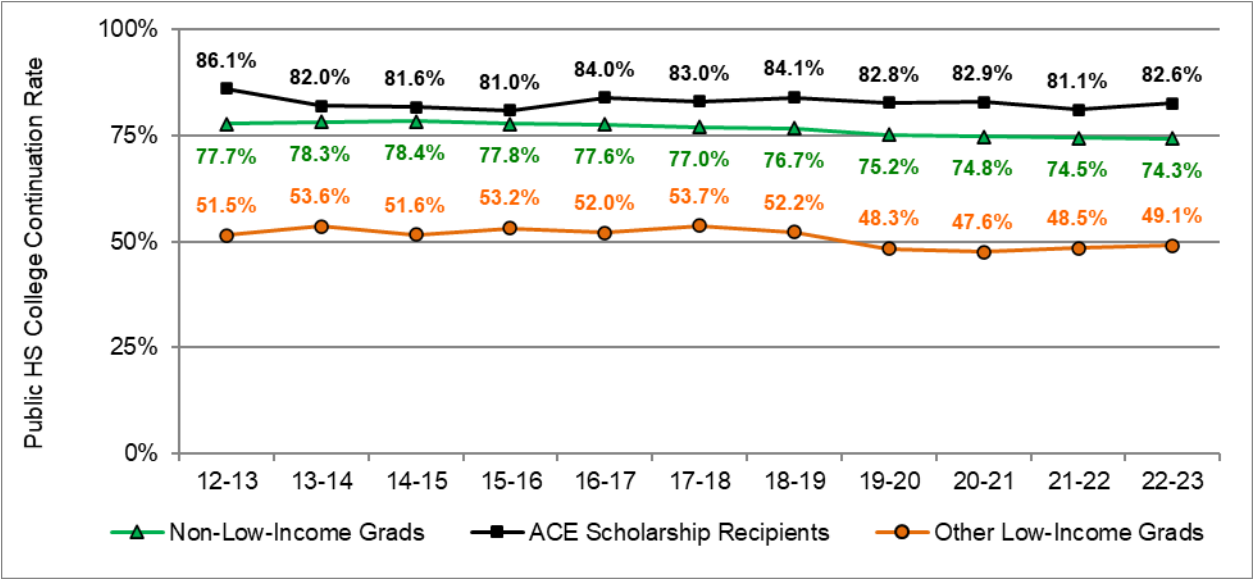


## Growth of ACE Scholarship Program Awards, Recipients, and Credit Hours 2013-14 through 2023-24



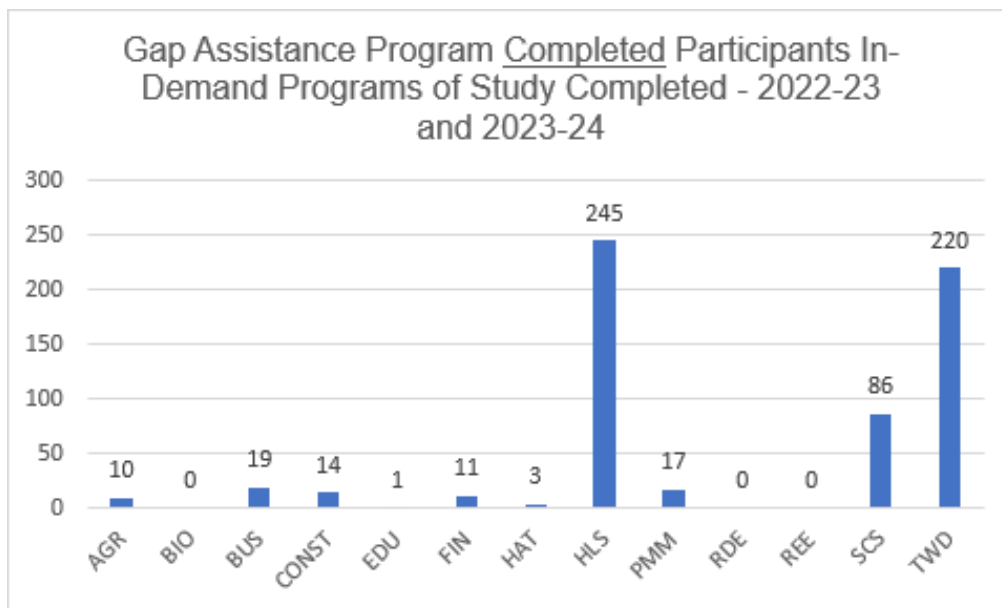


## Nebraska Public High School College Continuation Rates 2012-13 through 2022-23



### Community College Gap Assistance Program

In 2015 the Legislature 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, the Gap program currently receives roughly \$1.9 million annually. These funds are distributed to the state’s six community colleges, which recruit and select eligible low-income students enrolled in short-term non-credit and for-credit vocational 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; education; and hospitality and tourism.



## Excellence in Teaching Act

LB705, 2023, transferred administration of the Excellence in Teaching Act from the Nebraska Department of Education to the Commission as of July 1, 2024. The ETA consists of three forgivable loan programs:

- The Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program for currently employed teachers.
- The Attracting Excellence in Teaching Program for college students majoring in education.
- The AETP – Student Teacher Program for students in their student teaching semester.

## Nebraska Career Scholarship

LB1329, 2024, transferred administration of the Nebraska Career Scholarship Program for the community colleges and independent, nonprofit colleges and universities from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to the Commission as of July 1, 2024. The program provides renewable scholarships to undergraduate students majoring in high-demand fields.

## Door to College Scholarship

The Door to College Scholarship was created by LB705, 2023, and began operation July 1, 2024. The program provides scholarships to high school graduates who were housed at a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center.

## Career-Readiness and Dual-Credit Education Grant

The Career-Readiness and Dual-Credit Education Grant Program was created by LB705, 2023, and began operation July 1, 2024. The program provides grants to high school teachers taking graduate-level courses to qualify to teach dual enrollment courses or to increase the number of Career and Technical Education courses taught at their high schools.

*What does the Commission do?*

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**Provides information and advice on higher education to the Legislature and Governor. Conducts research and publishes reports on issues regarding higher education.**

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## **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](https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports).

### **Budget and Financial Analyses**

#### **Postsecondary Education Operating Budget Recommendations for 2025-2027** *(October 2024)*

This is a statutorily required analysis of public institutional budget requests (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1416). It includes information about higher education appropriations, affordability, access and accountability, discussions of statewide funding issues, and recommendations. *(See page 20 of this document for more information.)*

#### **Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization for 2025-2027** *(October 2024)*

This statutorily required report (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1416) 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. *(See page 19 of this document for more information.)*

## Tuition, Fees, and College Affordability Report *(September 2024)*

This statutorily required report (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1416 (2)(c)) 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.

### Did you know?

Nebraska ranked 31<sup>st</sup> from the top among states in 2021-22 with \$303 in need-based student grant aid per full-time equivalent undergraduate student. The national average was \$776 of need-based grant aid per FTE undergraduate student.

*Source: 2024 Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid Report*

Among the report's general findings:

- As a result of relatively strong state and local tax support, tuition and fees at Nebraska's postsecondary institutions remain moderate compared to institutions in most states;
- Nevertheless, 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 would be provided by the state.

## Academic Analyses

### College Course Offerings for High School Students by Nebraska Public Institutions *(2023, 2024)*

Historically, this report described the types of distance education courses available to Nebraska residents. Due to the ubiquity of distance education opportunities today, since 2018 the Commission has collected and reported only data related to dual enrollment college courses offered to Nebraska high school students. The report includes summary data of dual enrollment courses by subject, instructional modality, location, number of course offerings, and colleges and high schools providing courses.

## Dashboards

### College Continuation Rates *(Last revised October 2024)*

This dashboard provides an estimate of college-going rates (by spring term the year after high school graduation) for each of Nebraska's public high schools that awarded regular high school diplomas from 2007-08 through 2022-23. Data users also can download an Excel file of the entire dataset.

### **Degrees and Other Awards** *(Last revised May 2024)*

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 IPEDS surveys. Information is provided by degree level, gender, race/ethnicity, age, and discipline cluster. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's *2024 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Degrees and Other Awards Conferred 2012-13 through 2022-23*.

### **Degrees and Other Awards by CIP Code** *(Last revised May 2024)*

These dashboards allow users to drill into IPEDS degree data at the six-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) level – essentially a student's major – by degree level, institution, gender, and race/ethnicity. The data provide a level of detail useful for employers, researchers, and education providers.

### **Enrollment** *(Last revised October 2024)*

These dashboards summarize enrollments at Nebraska's public colleges and universities, independent colleges and universities, and for-profit/career schools, as reported in the federal IPEDS surveys. Information is provided by student level, attendance status, gender, race/ethnicity, age, and distance education status. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's *2024 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Enrollment (Fall enrollment: 2013 through 2023; 12-month enrollment: 2013-14 through 2022-23)*.

## **Other Analyses, Publications**

**Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska** *(2023, 2024)* 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 two sections: Enrollment and Degrees and Other Awards.

**Measuring Accomplishments** *(2023, 2024)* This annual report is a companion piece to the *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*. Data from a variety of sources is used to measure Nebraska's progress toward achieving the major statewide goals outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan* through national comparisons and institutional peer comparisons.

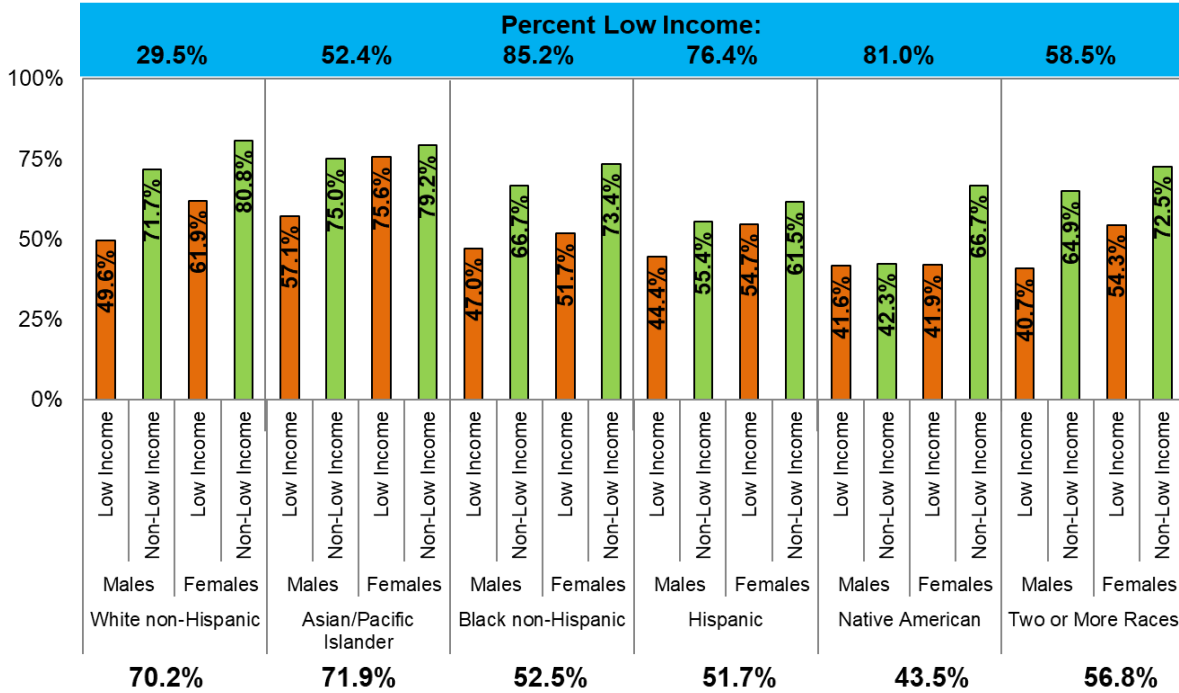
### **Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report** *(March 2023, 2024)*

This statutorily required annual report provides data to the Nebraska Legislature to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three key priorities for Nebraska's postsecondary education system developed by the 2003 LR174 Higher Education Task Force and incorporated in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1428 (3). They are:

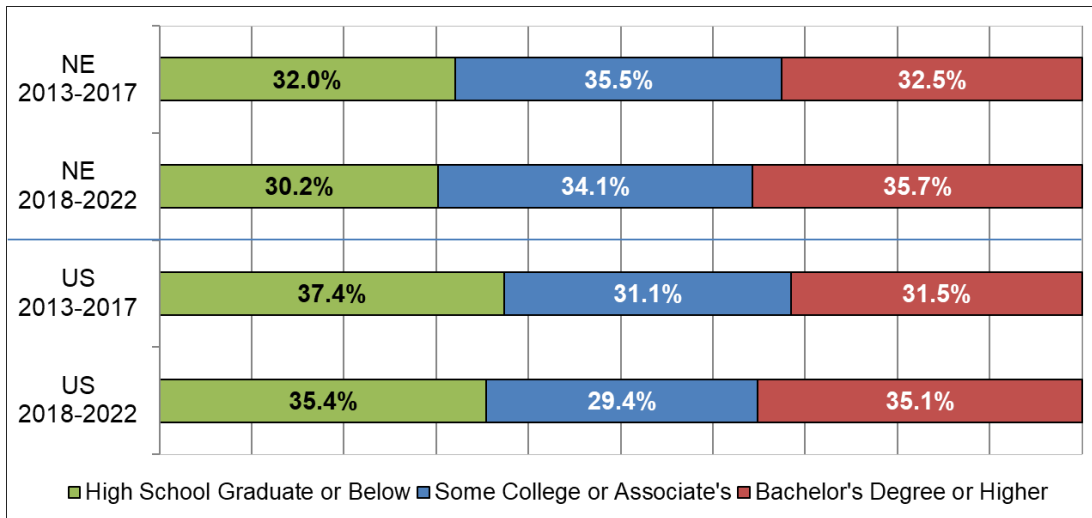
- Increase the number of students who enter postsecondary education;

- 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.

### College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Student Income Status 2021-22



### Educational Attainment for Nebraska and U.S. 22- to 64-Year-Olds



*What does the Commission do?*

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**Authorizes academic programs**

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## **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. (*Nebraska Constitution Article VII-14*)

During the 2023-2024 biennium, the Commission reviewed 484 existing programs. Of those, 468 were approved to continue and 16 were returned to the institution for further review. The institutions also reported that they had discontinued 13 programs—actions that do not require Commission approval.

The Commission also reviewed eight 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 30 proposals for new academic programs and organizational units at public institutions. One proposal was withdrawn. Another 103 proposed programs were reviewed and determined to be reasonable and moderate extensions of existing programs, thus requiring no action by the Commission.

### **Consumer Protection**

**Closed Institutions** When four-year institutions close, state statutes require their records to be transferred to the registrar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Commission facilitates record transfer and assists students in obtaining transcripts, often for several years after closure. One campus closed in the 2023-24 biennium: Purdue University Global in Lincoln. In addition, Mission University in Omaha declined to renew its authorization to operate in August 2024.

**Student Complaints** State statutes provide an avenue for students to file a complaint against an institution if it has violated the Postsecondary Institution Act. Few student complaints rise to this level. Nevertheless, Commission staff assist students by answering questions and often walking them through the complaint process at their institution, explaining financial aid issues, or putting

them in touch with the appropriate person at their institution. Documented complaints conservatively average roughly 40 per year. Many others are answered by a phone call and are not formally recorded.

*What does the Commission do?*

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**Considers and approves or disapproves proposals from  
new or out-of-state institutions to operate in Nebraska**

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

**New or out-of-state institutions authorized in the 2023-2024 biennium:**

**Osiri University—administrative office only** (Lincoln, Nebraska)

Osiri University is a private institution that offers a curriculum that combines the African philosophy of Ubuntu (a united spirit in creating a better world) and a Western educational framework. Instruction is entirely online.

**Trinity Evangelical Divinity School of Trinity International University** (Deerfield, Illinois)

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School is the divinity school of Trinity International University. Authorization is for two graduate courses offered at Brookside Evangelical Free Church in Omaha. The courses would apply to a certificate or degree available at the Illinois campus or online.



**Ricketts Great Books College—administrative office only** (Omaha, Nebraska)

Merriam Webster defines great books as “of, relating to, or centered in certain classics of literature, philosophy, history, and science that are believed to contain the basic ideas of western culture.” Great books, in whole or in part, have long been a staple in liberal arts education. Ricketts Great Books College uses this foundation for its curriculum. Instruction is entirely online.

**Life Chiropractic College West (Life West)** (Hayward, California)

Life Chiropractic College West has been operating since 1978 in California. Its authorization is to offer the Doctor of Chiropractic degree in Bellevue, Nebraska. Life West has an agreement with Bellevue University to utilize one floor of an existing building for its offices, classrooms, and chiropractic clinic.

**Chamberlain University—withdrawn** (Chicago, Illinois)

Chamberlain applied in fall 2022 for authorization to operate in the state. Authorization was expected to be granted in December 2022, but the application was withdrawn before the Commission could act on it.

**Renewals and Additional Programs**

In addition, twelve institutions provided annual reports to the Commission and four institutions renewed their recurrent authorizations 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 at public postsecondary education institutions.

**The first responsibility** is to review, monitor, and approve or disapprove capital construction project requests of the University of Nebraska, Nebraska State College System, and the community colleges that use more than \$2 million in tax funds to construct, renovate, or acquire facilities, or more than \$112,000 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 2023 through December 2024, the Commission reviewed and approved 10 capital construction project proposals submitted by the institutions.

**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 individual capital construction budget 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 individual capital construction budget requests eligible for state funding. Only those requests that were approved by the governing boards and the Commission and are requesting state funding in the biennial budget request are prioritized. The Commission identified ongoing routine maintenance and addressing deferred repair as two essential areas in need of new State and institutional funding for the 2025-2027 biennium. The Commission prioritized 14 individual capital construction budget requests for the coming biennium, with the highest priorities being:

1. UNMC Project Health,
2. State Colleges CSC-PSC-WSC M&R Pool,
3. WSC Rice & Gardner IAC-ARC (shortfall),
4. PSC Indoor Recreation Complex (shortfall), and
5. UNO Peter Kiewit Institute (planning).

The latest full report, *Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization 2025-2027 Biennium*, is available at the Commission's website, [ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports](https://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 2024, the Commission reviewed 15 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 17 requests, four were new and expanded requests for which the Commission recommended new general funds.

In addition, there were 13 requests that were part of the continuation budget recommendation. The total dollar amount for institutional continuation costs and new and expanded requests was \$93,111,046 for the biennium.

The full report, *2025-2027 Institutional Operating Budget Recommendations*, is available on the Commission's website, [ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports](https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports).

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## **Initiatives, Programs, and Updates**

### **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 and has renewed its participation every two years, as required. The most recent renewal was in August 2024.

The Coordinating Commission is the state's portal agency for the initiative, meaning Nebraska institutions apply to the Commission to participate. As of December 2022, 27 Nebraska colleges and universities had joined SARA. In the summer of 2023 two additional institutions joined, both private career schools. All 29 have renewed their participation annually and continue to be active members.

### **FAFSA Completion Initiative and Universal FAFSA**

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 FAFSA Completion Initiative, the Commission can provide certain designated entities – typically high schools – with limited data about their students' progress in completing and filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA Initiative enables 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.

Related to the FAFSA Completion Initiative, the Commission has partnered with the Nebraska Department of Education, Education Quest, high school counselors, postsecondary financial aid officers, and community organizations to develop resources and inform high school seniors, their parents, and high school counselors and administrators about the FAFSA high school graduation requirement that went into effect for the graduating class of 2024-25.

## **Dual Enrollment**

In 2019, the Coordinating Commission and the State Board of Education undertook a joint dual enrollment initiative to study ways to increase dual enrollment course-taking in Nebraska. The initiative was assisted by consultants from the Education Commission of the States and resulted in a report with recommendations directed at increased access, better communications with students and parents, credit transfer, increasing the number of qualified instructors, affordability, and improved data and reporting. The Coordinating Commission has implemented data collection improvements and requested additional funding for the Access College Early Scholarship program.

During the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions, the Coordinating Commission worked with the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee to target lottery funds to dual credit priority areas such as grants for teachers seeking graduate credits necessary to teach dual enrollment courses, resulting in the creation of the Career-Readiness and Dual-Credit Education Grant Program and a new eligibility category under the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program. The Commission also worked with the Nebraska Statewide Workforce and Education Reporting System (NSWERS) on the development of their *2024 Dual Enrollment Special Report*.

## **Attainment Goal**

The Coordinating Commission partnered with the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska State College System, the Nebraska community colleges, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee to develop LR335, which set an educational attainment goal that 70% of Nebraskans aged 25 to 34 will have a degree or other postsecondary credential with economic value by 2030. LR 335 was adopted by the Nebraska Legislature in April 2022. The Commission continues to track progress toward the goal along with its education partners and uses it to inform reports and potential initiatives.

## **Community College ARPA Grant**

LB1014 appropriated \$60 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Coordinating Commission to distribute via a grant program to the six community college areas. The Commission worked with the community colleges, the Budget Division, and the State Accounting Division to develop guidelines, application materials, and reporting processes for the funds, which can be used for capital projects and programs that qualify under federal rules to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission continues to monitor college expenditures and review and approves significant project changes. All funds have been obligated and must be expended by December 31, 2026.

## **Prison Education Program Consortium**

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 reinstated the ability of incarcerated individuals to access Pell Grants if their college or university has an approved Prison Application Program (PEP). Postsecondary institutions must go through an application process with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS), their institutional accreditor (usually the Higher Learning Commission for Nebraska postsecondary institutions), and the U.S. Department of Education to become a PEP. The Coordinating Commission is a participant in the Nebraska Consortium for Postsecondary Education in Prison created by the NDCS to advise the NDCS on PEP applications.

## **New to the Commission**

Governor Pillen appointed three new Commission members during the 2023-2024 biennium. Tamara Weber of Columbus was appointed to represent District 5 in February 2023, Dannika Nelson of Oakland was appointed as a member-at-large in August 2023, and Dr. LeDonna Griffin was appointed as a member-at-large in January 2024.

As of November 2024, there was one Commission vacancy (District 4).