NEBRASKA

ccpe

COORDINATING COMMISSION
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

2026 Biennial Report

Covering Calendar Years 2025 and 2026

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This report and others are available at the Coordinating Commission's website:
ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports

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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 2026 Biennial Report provides an overview of the Coordinating Commission's accomplishments during 2025 and 2026.

THE COORDINATING COMMISSION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:	
• Creating and putting into action a comprehensive statewide plan to guide Nebraska's higher education system.	• Approving or disapproving academic programs based on specific criteria: need, demand, unnecessary duplication, resources, and cost.
• Partnering with Legislators to develop innovative and results-driven higher education policy.	• Assembling and analyzing statewide data and publishing reports tied to the state's higher education goals.
• Helping low-income Nebraska students attend college by awarding over $26 million in need-based financial aid annually.	• Administering roughly $367 million in annual state appropriations to Nebraska's six community colleges.
• Administering the Community College Gap Assistance Program, which offers financial aid to students in high-need fields.	• Authorizing the operation of out-of-state and new Nebraska postsecondary institutions.
• Administering the Excellence in Teaching Act, the Nebraska Career Scholarships for community colleges and independent institutions, and the Door to College Scholarship.	• Saving Nebraska colleges and universities thousands of dollars through administration of a nationwide distance learning agreement.
• 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.	

What does the Commission do?

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

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 substantive recent revision of the *Comprehensive Plan* occurred in 2022 as the result of the adoption of LR335, which created a state educational attainment goal. Minor updates were made in 2025. The full plan is available on the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

What does the Commission do?

Administers student financial aid programs

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 2024-25, $16.4 million of the grant's funding came from State lottery funds and $8.1 million from the State's general fund. In 2025-26, lottery funds remained at $16.4 million while the general fund appropriation decreased to $7.1 million.

Nebraska Opportunity Grant Biennium History:

2024-25
Total awarded: $24,405,784

13,386 students received a grant (42.9% of eligible students)

Public institutions: 10,612 students
$1,848 average award
Private, non-profit: 2,467 students
$1,691 average award
Proprietary/for-profit: 307 students
$2,044 average award

Average grant awarded: $1,823

2025-26:
Total awarded: $23,391,037

12,506 students received a grant (42.9% of eligible students)

Public institutions: 9,796 students
$1,922 average award
Private, non-profit: 2,394 students
$1,661 average award
Proprietary/for-profit: 316 students
$1,840 average award

Average grant awarded: $1,870

Access College Early Scholarship Program

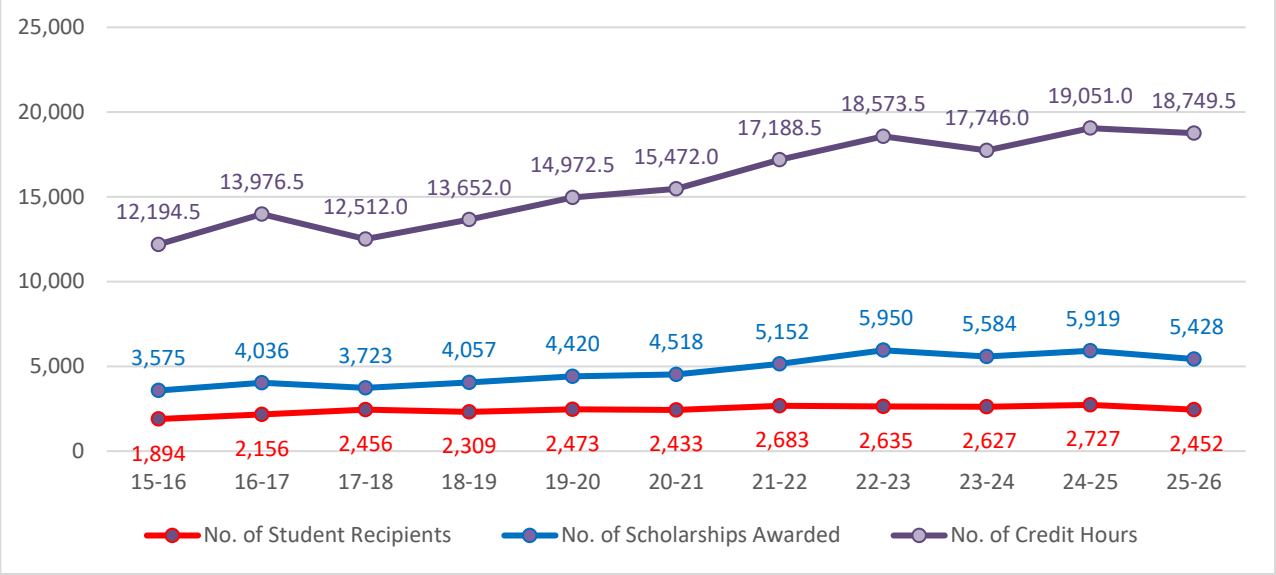
The Access College Early Scholarship Program awards scholarships to high school students from low-income families who enroll in a college course at a participating public or private postsecondary institution while the student is still in high school. The Commission recommended the creation of this program 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 by the state General Fund now.

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

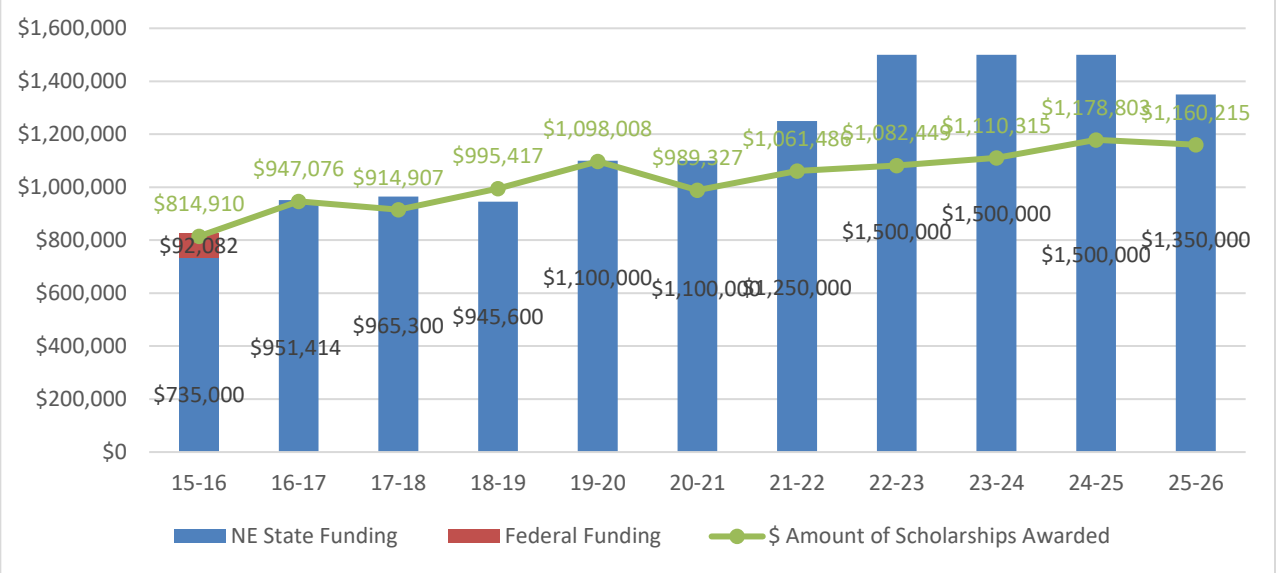
- Increase academic rigor during high school;
- Remain in school and graduate at higher rates;
- Enroll in college at an increased rate;
- Streamline their transitions from high school to college;
- Have a head start on their chosen postsecondary programs;
- Save money once in college; and
- Return for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

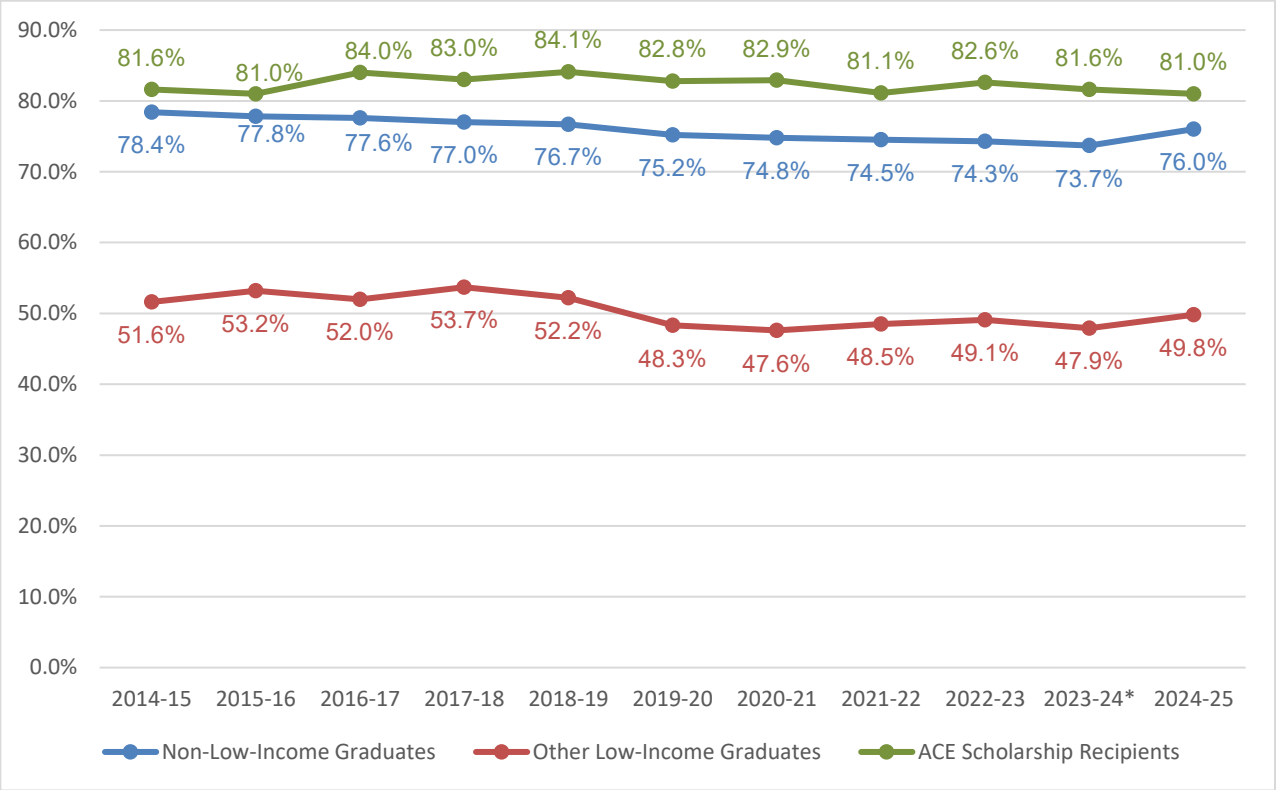
ACE Scholarship Program Funding and Awards
2015-16 through 2025-26



Growth of ACE Scholarship Program Awards, Recipients, and Credit Hours
2015-16 through 2025-26

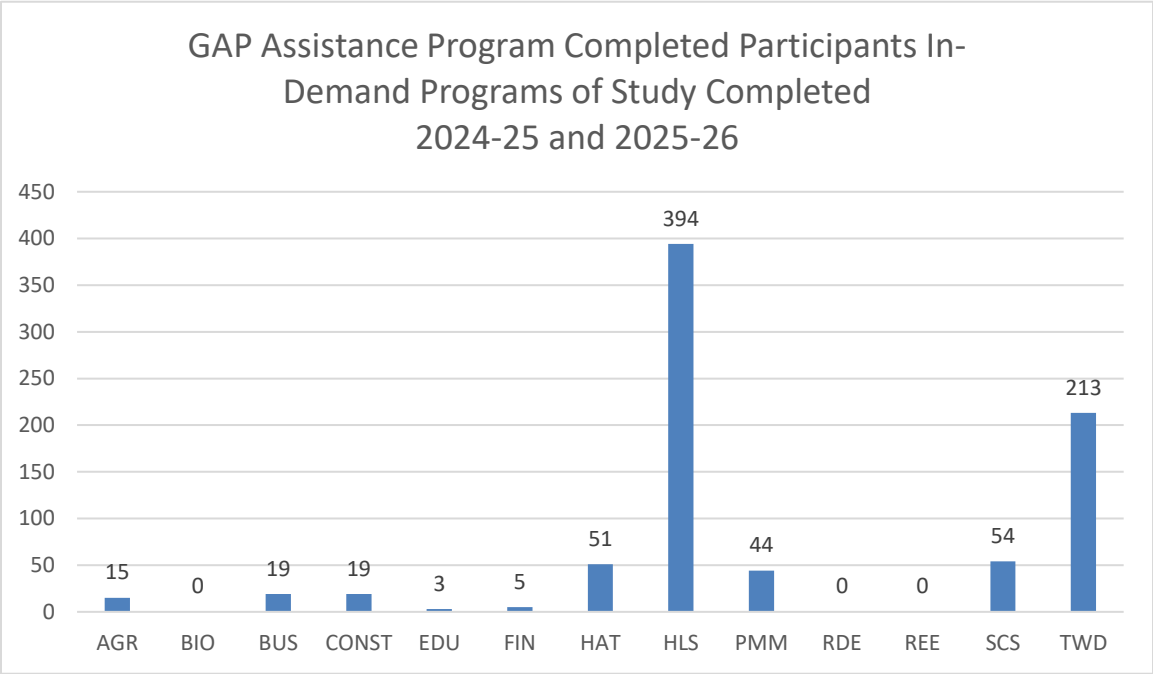


Nebraska Public High School College Continuation Rates
2014-15 through 2024-25



Community College Gap Assistance Program

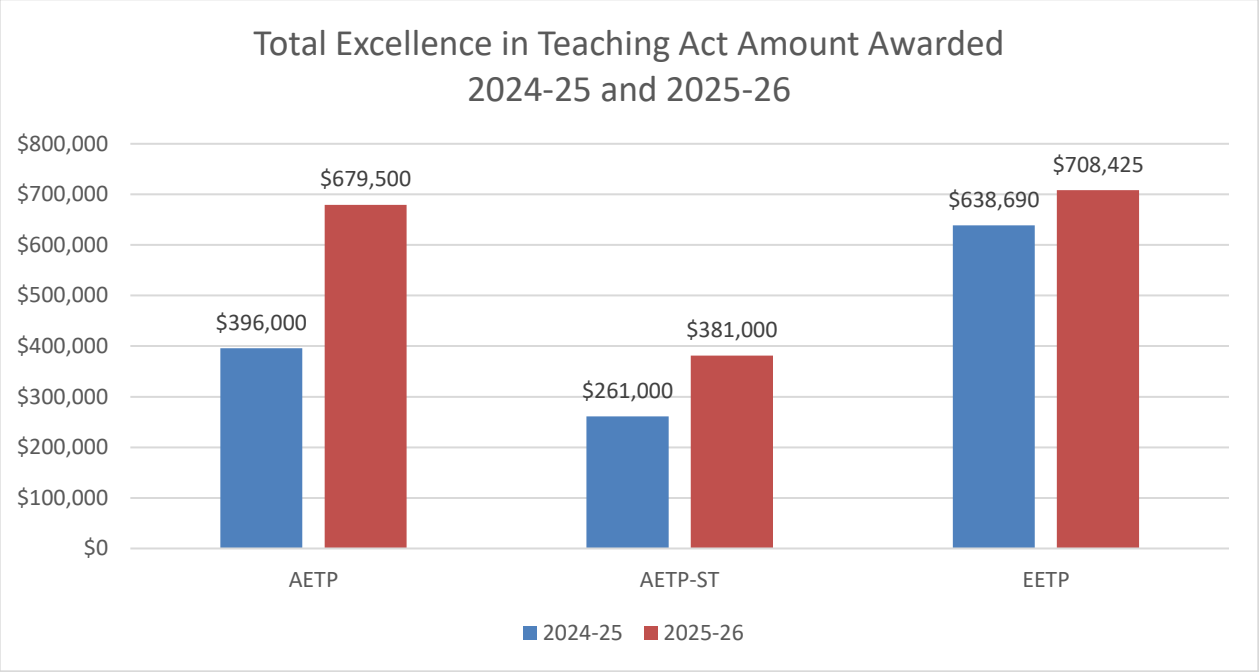
In 2015 the Legislature gave authority to the Commission to administer the Community College Gap Assistance Program, which had a formal start date of July 1, 2016. Through lottery funds, the Gap program currently receives roughly $1.4 million annually. These funds are distributed to the state's six community 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

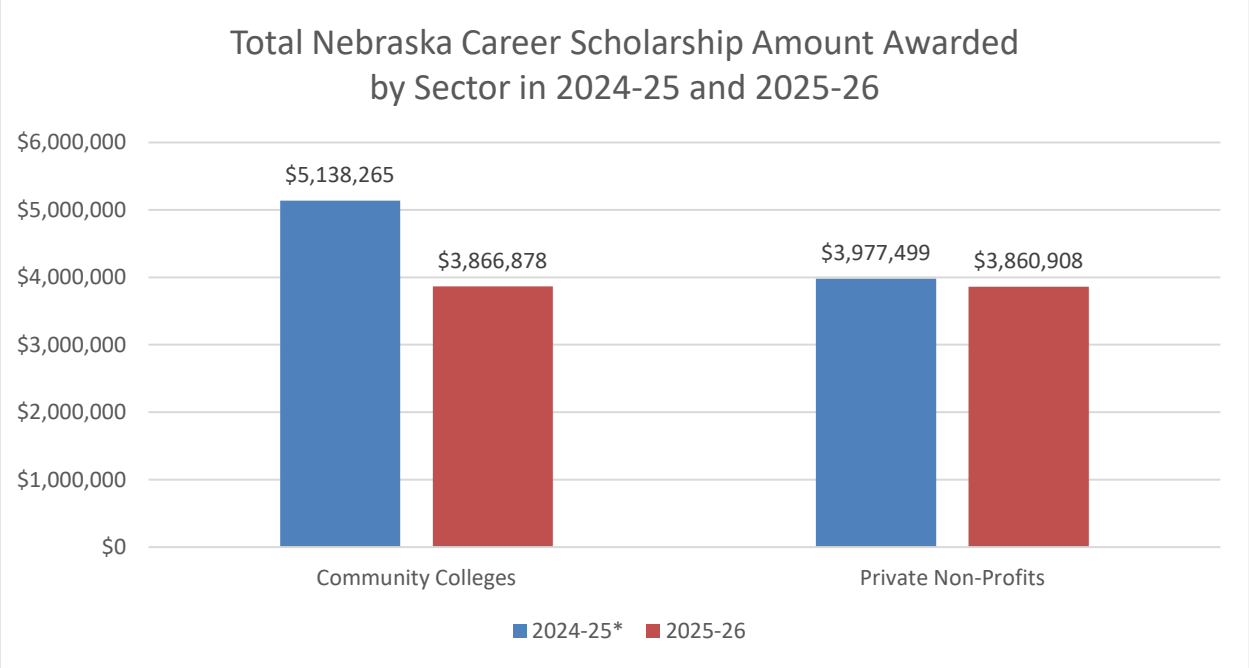
LB705, 2023, transferred administration of the Excellence in Teaching Act from the Nebraska Department of Education to the Commission as of July 1, 2024. The ETA consists of three forgivable loan programs:

- 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.

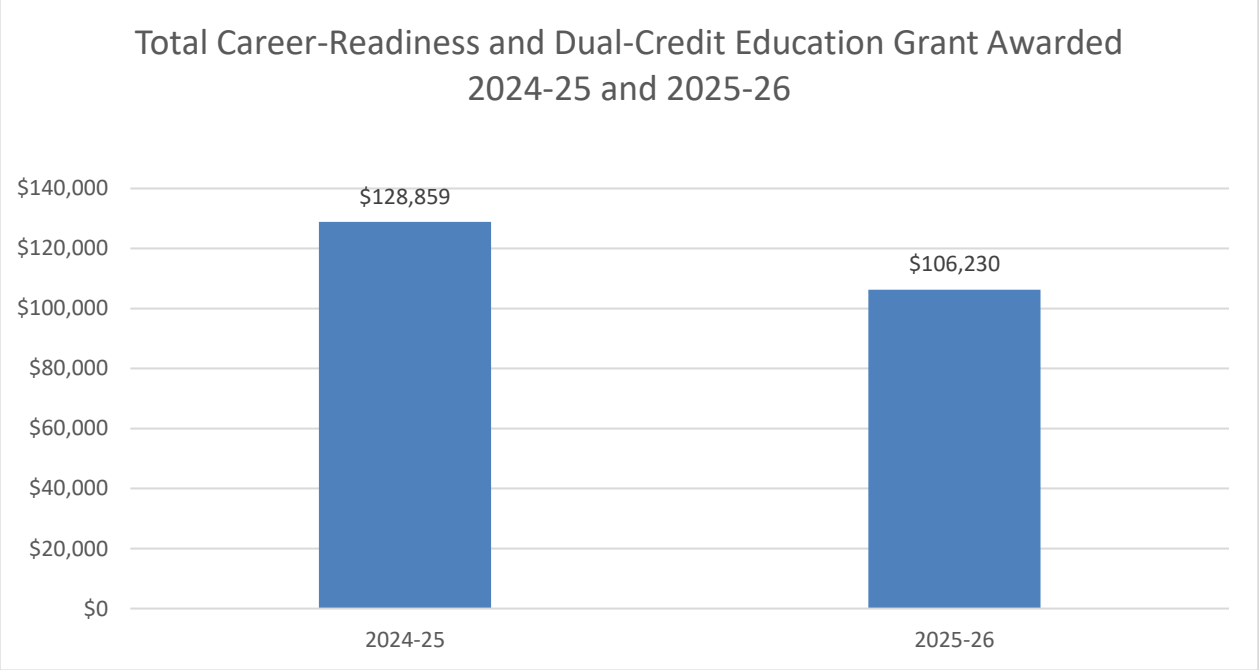


Door to College Scholarship

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. No awards were made in 2024-25, and $13,833 was awarded in 2025-26.

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?

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

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.

Budget and Financial Analyses

Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization for 2027-2029 *(October 2026)*
This statutorily required report (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1416) includes the Commission's funding and priority recommendations for capital construction budget requests from the Nebraska State College System, the University of Nebraska, and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. (*See page 20 of this document for more information.)*

Postsecondary Education Operating Budget Recommendations for 2027-2029 *(October 2026)*
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 21 of this document for more information.)*

Tuition, Fees, and College Affordability Report *(September 2026)*
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 35th from the top among states in 2023-24 with $330 in need-based student grant aid per full-time equivalent undergraduate student. The national average was $955 of need-based grant aid per FTE undergraduate student.

Source: 2026 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 were provided by the state.

Academic Analyses

College Course Offerings for High School Students by Nebraska Public Institutions *(2026)*
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 (*Updated September 2026*)
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 2024-25. Data users also can download an Excel file of the entire dataset.

Degrees and Other Awards (*Updated May 2026*)
These dashboards summarize the number of degrees and awards conferred by Nebraska's public and nonpublic colleges and universities as reported in the federal IPEDS surveys. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's *2026 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Degrees and Other Awards Conferred 2014-2015 through 2024-2025*.

Degrees and Other Awards by CIP Code (*Updated May 2026*)
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, sex, and race/ethnicity. The data provide a level of detail useful for employers, researchers, and education providers.

Enrollment (*Updated September 2026*)
These dashboards summarize enrollments at Nebraska's public and nonpublic colleges and universities as reported in the federal IPEDS surveys. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's *2026 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Enrollment (Fall enrollment: 2015 through 2025; 12-month enrollment: 2015-16 through 2024-25).*

First-Time Freshmen Migration (*Updated July 2026*)
These dashboards summarize the migration of first-time freshmen as reported by public and nonpublic colleges and universities via the federal IPEDS surveys. The information is a supplement to the data presented in the Commission's *Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report*.

FASFA Completion *(Updated weekly)*
This dashboard provides aggregate information by secondary schools, school districts, and certain designated entities on their students' progress toward completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form.

Other Analyses, Publications

Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska *(2025, 2026)* 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 (*2024, 2025*) This annual report is a companion piece to the *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education.* Data from a variety of sources are used to measure Nebraska's progress toward achieving the major statewide goals outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan* through national comparisons and institutional peer comparisons.

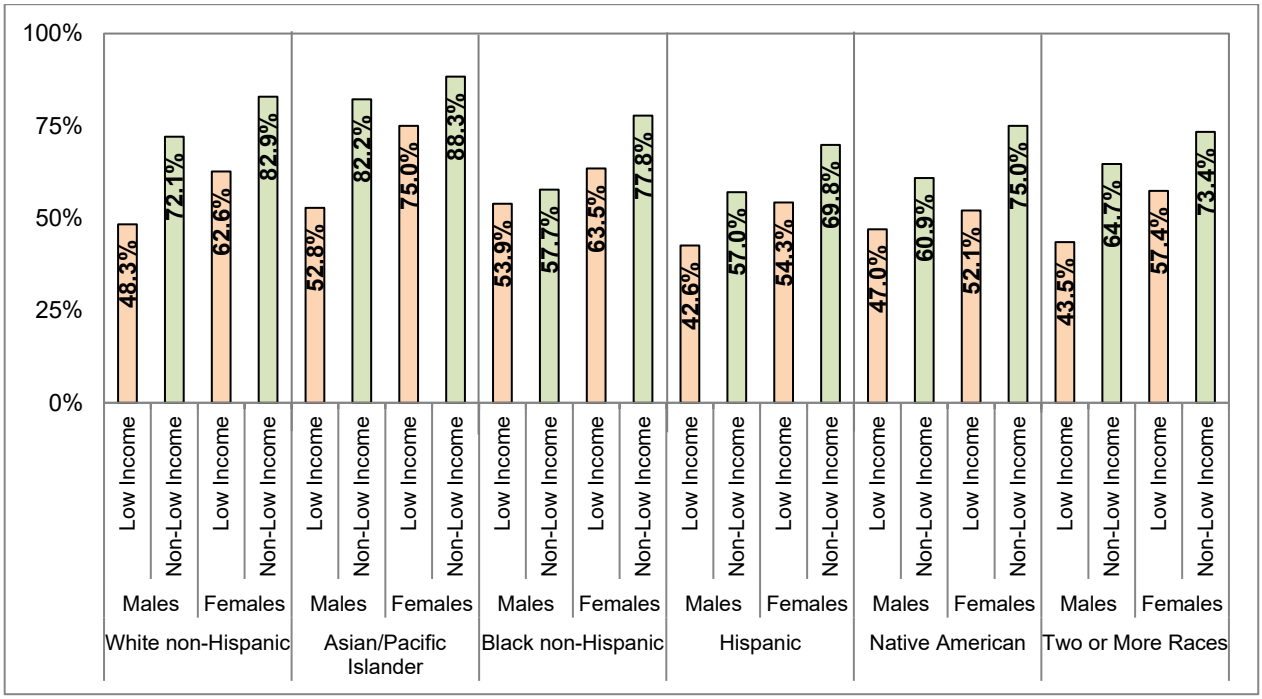
Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report *(March 2025, 2026)*
This statutorily required annual report provides data to the Nebraska Legislature to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three key priorities for Nebraska's postsecondary education system developed by the 2003 LR174 Higher Education 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

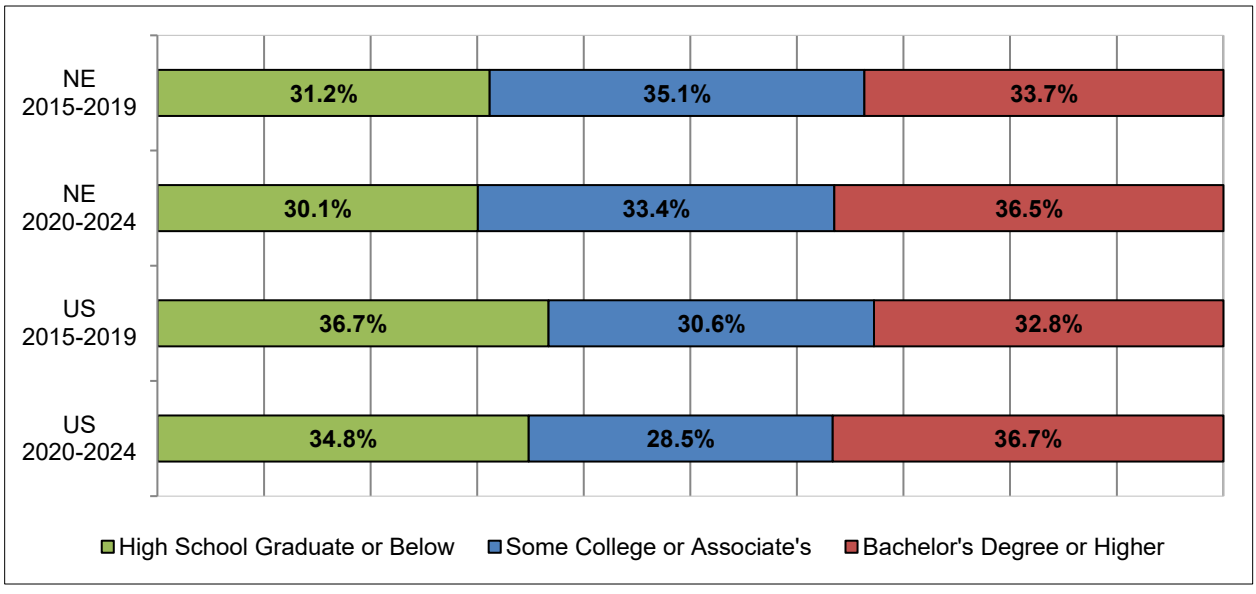
program completion; and

- 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, Sex, and Student Income Status 2024-25



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



What does the Commission do?

Authorizes academic programs

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 2025-2026 biennium, the Commission reviewed 257 existing programs. Of those, 254 were approved to continue and three were returned to the institution for further review. The institutions also reported that they had discontinued 103 programs—actions that do not require Commission approval.

In addition, the Commission reviewed three 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 29 proposals for new academic programs and organizational units at public institutions. Another 95 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. There were no campus closures in the 2025-26 biennium:

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?

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

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 2024-2025 biennium:

Osiri University (Lincoln, Nebraska)

Osiri University is a private institution offering online instruction that was authorized to establish an administrative office in Nebraska in March 2023. In January 2026 Osiri applied to offer a program in Montessori education that required students to physically meet together at a location in Lincoln. This necessitated an application for a physical presence in the state. It was approved in March 2026.

Eagle Gate College (aka Unitek Learning Education Group Corp)—no action taken (Murray, Utah)

In August 2026, Eagle Gate College applied for a recurrent authorization to operate. The application was to offer an Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) in North Platte in conjunction with Great Plains Health.

Commission Guidance states that “the Coordinating Commission will not take action on the application until the applicant provides proof that it has received all other necessary approvals from Nebraska entities.” A new nursing program would require approval from the Nebraska Board of Nursing. On October 28, 2026, the Board of Nursing denied Eagle Gate’s application. Eagle Gate has 30 days during which it can appeal the Board of Nursing’s decision. Until such approval is received, the Coordinating Commission cannot act on the application. Eagle Gate has indicated they intend to appeal.

Renewals and Additional Programs

In addition, over the two-year period 24 institutions provided annual reports to the Commission, two institutions renewed their recurrent authorizations to operate, and one institution received approval to offer a new program.

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 $5 million in tax funds to construct, renovate, or acquire facilities, or more than $200,000 per year in additional tax funds to operate and maintain them. Disapproved projects cannot receive state funds for construction or ongoing operating and maintenance costs. From January 2025 through December 2026, the Commission reviewed and approved seven 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 2027-2029 biennium. The Commission prioritized seven individual capital construction budget requests for the coming biennium, with the highest priorities being:

1. PSC Indoor Recreation Complex
2. PSC A.V. Larson Renovation & Addition
3. PSC Hoyt HVAC Renovation
4. WSC Memorial Stadium Upgrades
5. CSC Hildreth Hall Demolition

The latest full report, *Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization 2027-2029 Biennium*, is available at the Commission's website, 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 2026, the Commission reviewed 19 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 19 requests, eight were new and expanded requests for which the Commission recommended new general funds for five requests, recommended some new general funds for two requests, and recommended no new general funds for one request.

In addition, there were eight requests that were part of the continuation budget recommendation. The total dollar amount for institutional continuation costs and new and expanded requests was $155,722,798 for the biennium.

The full report, *2027-2029 Institutional Operating Budget Recommendations*, is available on the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

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 2026.

The Coordinating Commission is the state's portal agency for the initiative, meaning Nebraska institutions apply to the Commission to participate. As of December 2024, 29 Nebraska colleges and universities had joined SARA, including two tribal institutions and two private career schools. One of the private career schools subsequently left SARA because it no longer offered distance education. The other career school was not allowed to renew its participation because of poor financial status. The other 27 institutions have renewed their participation annually and continue to be active members.

FAFSA Completion Initiative and Universal FAFSA

In 2015, the 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-completion 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 continues to cooperate with the Nebraska Department of Education to evaluate potential ways to improve the availability of dual enrollment opportunities across the state and supports the NDE goal that 50 percent of high school graduates will have taken advantage of dual enrollment by 2030. The Commission also worked with the Nebraska Statewide Workforce and Education Reporting System (NSWERS) on the development of their 2024 and 2025 *Dual Enrollment Special Reports* and their 2025 *Access College Early Scholarship Program Evaluation*.

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 percent 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.

P20 Alliance

Beginning in 2025, the Commission has partnered with the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska State College System, the Nebraska Department of Education, the Nebraska Department of Labor, Nebraska's Community Colleges, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, and the Nebraska Statewide Workforce and Education Reporting System to create a P20 Alliance. The purposes of the P20 Alliance are to strengthen alignment, support sector leadership, add cross-sector capacity, and guide improvements with data. P20 Alliance priorities are to increase educational attainment to meet Nebraska's 70 percent attainment goal, strengthen workforce pathways, and improve system effectiveness and accountability.

Direct Admissions Project

An early initiative of the P20 Alliance is a direct admissions project that, when fully implemented, will allow Nebraska high school seniors to be notified of admission to Nebraska colleges and

universities without applying if they meet certain conditions. The grant-funded project, which includes participation of the Commission, the Nebraska Department of Education, and Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions, builds on the experiences of nearly 30 states that have developed direct admissions processes over the past five years.

Community College ARPA Grant

LB1014 appropriated $60 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the 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 reviews 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 Education 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 Commission is a participant in the Nebraska Consortium for Postsecondary Education in Prison, which was created by the NDCS to advise it on PEP applications and address barriers to expanding postsecondary education and training opportunities in NDCS facilities.

Community College Funding

Beginning in 2024-25, the community colleges' authority to levy local property taxes for operating costs was replaced with state aid payments from the Community College Levy Reduction program and paid from the Community College Future fund. The Commission is responsible for the allocation and distribution of these funds, which totaled $284 million in 2026-27. The Commission is also responsible for the allocation and distribution of the community college state aid formula, which totaled $114 million in 2026-27.

New Duties from Legislation

Funding from Foreign Adversarial Sources: In 2025, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB306, which tasked the Commission with developing guidelines and collecting and reporting data from all Nebraska postsecondary education institutions related to funding received from and contracts

made with foreign adversary sources. These sources include governments, legal entities, and individuals from China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and the Maduro Regime in Venezuela. The first reports were received and published in January 2026.

Public Postsecondary Institution Salary and Benefit Reporting: In 2026, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB956, which requires that Nebraska public postsecondary institutions report data on salary and benefits for faculty and administrators to the Commission annually. The data must be reported by rank and position and include part-time instructors as well as full-time tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty. The Commission must publish an annual report and make the data publicly available on its website in a searchable and downloadable format. The first reports, covering calendar year 2025, were due to the Commission in fall 2026.

Prior Learning Act Cut Scores and Policies: Also in 2026, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB937, which included the Prior Learning Act. The Prior Learning Act requires the Commission to develop cut scores, which are the minimum scores an individual is required to achieve on prior learning examinations to receive college credit. The Commission set cut scores for Advanced Placement Examinations, International Baccalaureate Examinations, Cambridge International Examinations, College Level Examination Program (CLEP), DSST (formerly DANTES Subject Standardized Tests, and WorkKeys. All public postsecondary institutions must give college credit for scores meeting the minimum threshold or receive permission from the Commission to institute a higher threshold. LB937 also requires public postsecondary institutions to set prior learning examination policies, grant credit for scores meeting the cut score, and accept the scores in transfer. Institutions must report the among of credit granted for prior learning examinations to the Commission every other year beginning in December 2028.

New to the Commission

Governor Pillen appointed one new Commission member during the 2025-26 biennium. Beth Forney of Alliance was appointed as a member-at-large in July 2026.

As of November 2026, there were two commission vacancies: District 4 (Sarpy County) and an at-large position.