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Mike Baumgartner, Ph.D., Executive Director

*Promoting high quality, ready access, and efficient use of resources  
in Nebraska higher education.*

November 25, 2014

Patrick J. O'Donnell  
Clerk of the Legislature  
Room 2018, State Capitol

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE) is required by statute to provide a biennial report to the Governor and Legislature by December 1 of each even-numbered year. The report focuses on the activities and accomplishments of the Coordinating Commission during the past two years and reports any new private colleges authorized by the Commission to operate in Nebraska.

Because the last Coordinating Commission meeting of the 2014 biennium is Dec. 4, 2014, three days after the Dec. 1 deadline, we will update the attached report (which was approved by the CCPE's Planning and Consumer Information Committee on Nov. 20, 2014) to reflect any actions taken at the Dec. 4 Commission meeting. In doing so, we will be able to publish a more complete and accurate report of the biennium. The updated report will be distributed to your office and the Governor shortly after the Dec. 4 meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the biennial report, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff.

Sincerely,

Mike Baumgartner  
Executive Director

CC: Gov. Dave Heineman

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Commissioners

Colleen A. Adam, Chair  
Hastings

Carol Zink, Vice Chair  
Lincoln

Dr. John Bernthal  
Lincoln

Dr. Deborah Frison  
Omaha

Dr. Ron Hunter  
Hay Springs

Mary Lauritzen  
West Point

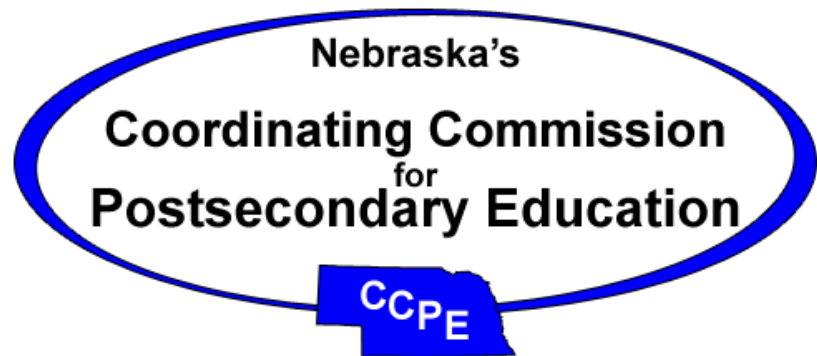
Dwayne Probyn  
Papillion

Eric Seacrest  
North Platte

Dr. Joyce D. Simmons  
Lincoln

Lori Warner  
South Sioux City

W. Scott Wilson  
Papillion



# 2014 BIENNIAL REPORT

**Covering December 2012 to December 2014**

COMMITTEE DRAFT

NOVEMBER 20, 2014

## **COMMISSIONERS**

Colleen A. Adam, Chair (Hastings)

Carol Zink, Vice Chair (Lincoln)

Dr. John Bernthal, (Lincoln)

Dr. Deborah A. Frison (Omaha)

Dr. Ron Hunter (Hay Springs)

Mary Lauritzen (West Point)

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Dr. Joyce Simmons (Valentine)

Lori Warner (South Sioux City)

W. Scott Wilson (Papillion)

This report and others are available at the  
Coordinating Commission's website:

**[www.ccpe.ne.gov](http://www.ccpe.ne.gov)**

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## 2014 Biennial Report

*Provided pursuant to §85-1412 (12) of Nebraska Statutes.*

The 2014 Biennial Report provides an “insider’s view” of Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education’s accomplishments during the past two years. Pursuant to state statute, the Coordinating Commission utilizes this report to inform its readers of what the Commission does and how well it is achieving its goals.

The Coordinating Commission is proud to share its activities during the past two years and how its accomplishments relate to the Commission’s overarching goals and mission.

### **What is the Commission?**

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].

Almost all states have an agency similar to the Coordinating Commission.

## Nebraska's CCPE

Nebraska's Coordinating Commission is an independent agency with 11 Commissioners, who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature. There are 11 full-time State-funded employees, one part-time State-funded employee, and one federally-funded employee on the Commission's staff. The Commission promotes high quality, ready access and efficient use of resources in Nebraska higher education by carrying out its duties as outlined in the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education Act.

The Commission's duties primarily affect the Community Colleges, the Nebraska State College System and the University of Nebraska.

To assist in carrying out its duties, the Commission maintains regular contact with the State Board of Education, the Community Colleges, the Nebraska State College System and the University of Nebraska. These contacts help improve communication and coordination of services among the Coordinating Commission and providers of higher education.

### What does the Commission do?

#### *The Commission:*

- Implements a statewide, comprehensive plan to guide Nebraska's higher education system, in collaboration with Community Colleges, the State College System and the University of Nebraska;
- Administers student financial aid and other federal programs;
- Administers State allocations to Nebraska Community Colleges;
- Conducts research and publishes reports on issues pertaining to higher education;
- Provides information and advice on higher education to the Legislature;
- Authorizes academic programs;
- Considers and approves or disapproves proposals from new or out-of-state institutions to operate in Nebraska.
- Considers and approves or disapproves proposals for facilities; and
- Reviews institutions' operating and capital construction budget proposals and makes recommendations on those requests to the Governor and the Legislature.

*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***

As required by statute, the Commission has developed and periodically revises a plan to provide direction for the future of higher education in Nebraska. This document, the *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*, identifies goals that lead to an educationally and economically sound, vigorous and collaborative system of higher education.

The *Comprehensive Plan* was developed in collaboration with the state’s Community Colleges, State College System and the University of Nebraska, and guides the coordination of Nebraska’s public higher education institutions and sectors. The Commission uses the *Plan* to facilitate most of its statutory decision-making processes.

In addition to identifying the overall goals and objectives for Nebraska’s public higher education system, the *Plan* defines the role and mission of each public higher education institution in Nebraska.

When developing proposals for new facilities or academic programs, Nebraska’s public colleges and universities must do so in compliance with the *Plan*.

The *Plan* is considered a “living document,” meaning it is reviewed and revised as the environment for postsecondary education evolves. Substantive changes to the *Plan* are made with care, however, and only after consulting with affected parties. After the Commission approves any revisions, the Legislature’s Education Committee reviews the *Plan* and the revisions at a public hearing and reports its findings to the Legislature. The *Plan* is available on the Commission’s website, [www.ccpe.ne.gov](http://www.ccpe.ne.gov), under the “Data Collection, Reports, and Presentations” link.

## **A Summary of the *Comprehensive Plan's* 14 Major Goals**

### **Meeting the Needs of Students**

**Goal 1:** Seek methods to increase participation and success in higher education for all students.

**Goal 2:** Be student-centered and offer lifelong learning opportunities.

**Goal 3:** Provide appropriate support services to help all students reach their educational goals.

**Goal 4:** Provide graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed as capable employees and responsible citizens.

### **Meeting the Needs of the State**

**Goal 5:** Be responsive to the workforce development and ongoing training needs of employers.

**Goal 6:** Contribute to the health and prosperity of citizens through research and development efforts, technology and attracting external funds.

**Goal 7:** Prepare individuals for productive, fulfilling lives.

**Goal 8:** Assess evolving needs and priorities and adopt new methods and technologies to address them.

### **Meeting Needs by Building Exemplary Institutions**

**Goal 9:** Fulfill roles and missions in an exemplary manner and compare favorably with peers.

**Goal 10:** Provide fair and reliable funding policies that provide appropriate levels of support to enable institutions to excel.

**Goal 11:** Be effective in meeting the needs of students and the state. Be efficient and accountable in expenditure of state resources.

### **Meeting Needs through Partnerships and Collaboration**

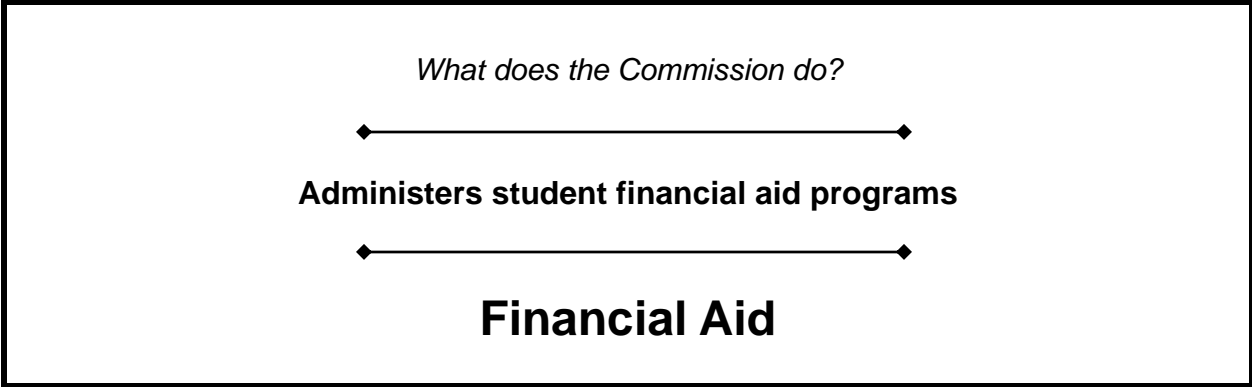
**Goal 12:** Collaborate with one another and with other entities to share resources and deliver programs cooperatively.

**Goal 13:** Work effectively with elementary and secondary schools to improve teaching and learning and to facilitate articulation.

### **Facilities Planning to Meet Educational Needs**

**Goal 14:** Advocate a physical environment for public postsecondary institutions that is: supportive of role and mission; well-utilized and effectively accommodates space needs; safe, accessible, cost-effective and well-maintained; and flexible to adapt to future changes.





The Commission administers the Nebraska Opportunity Grant, the Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program, and the ACE Plus scholarship 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, formerly known as the Nebraska State Grant, is awarded to students in consultation with financial aid administrators at Nebraska’s postsecondary institutions. These grants are awarded to students who are residents of Nebraska, attend a Nebraska postsecondary institution, and have a minimum Expected Family Contribution (EFC) as determined by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

In 2013-14, \$9.8 million of the grant’s funding came from State lottery funds and \$6.7 million from the State’s general funds. Those numbers increased from 2012-13: \$8.8 million from lottery funds and \$6.4

**Nebraska Opportunity Grant Biennium History:**

**2012-13:**  
**Total awarded: \$15,185,498**

- 15,757 students received a grant (27% of Nebraska Pell Grant-eligible students)
  - Public institutions: 11,062 students - \$1,078 average award
  - Private, non-profit: 3,037 students - \$993 average award
  - Proprietary/for-profit: 1,658 students - \$1,135 average award

**Average grant awarded: \$963.73**

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**2013-14:**  
**Total awarded: \$16,420,243**

- 15,944 students received a grant (30.8% of Nebraska eligible students)
  - Public institutions: 11,072 students - \$1,023 average award
  - Private, non-profit: 3,208 students - \$978 average award
  - Proprietary/for-profit: 1,664 students - \$1,178 average award

**Average grant awarded: \$1,030**

million from State general funds. The grant received federal funding until 2010-11.

## Access College Early Scholarship Program

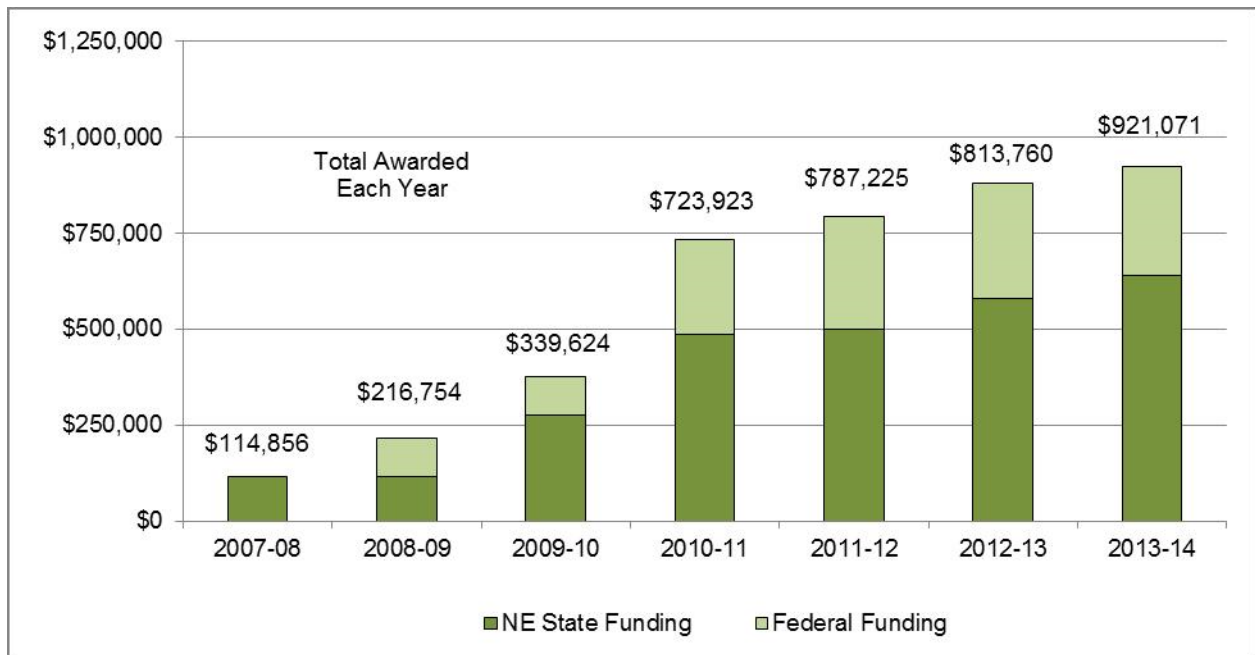
The Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program awards scholarships to low-income high school students who enroll in a college course at a participating public or private postsecondary institution while the student is still in high school. The Commission recommended the creation of this program in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

Current 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 prohibit a student from taking college courses while in high school.

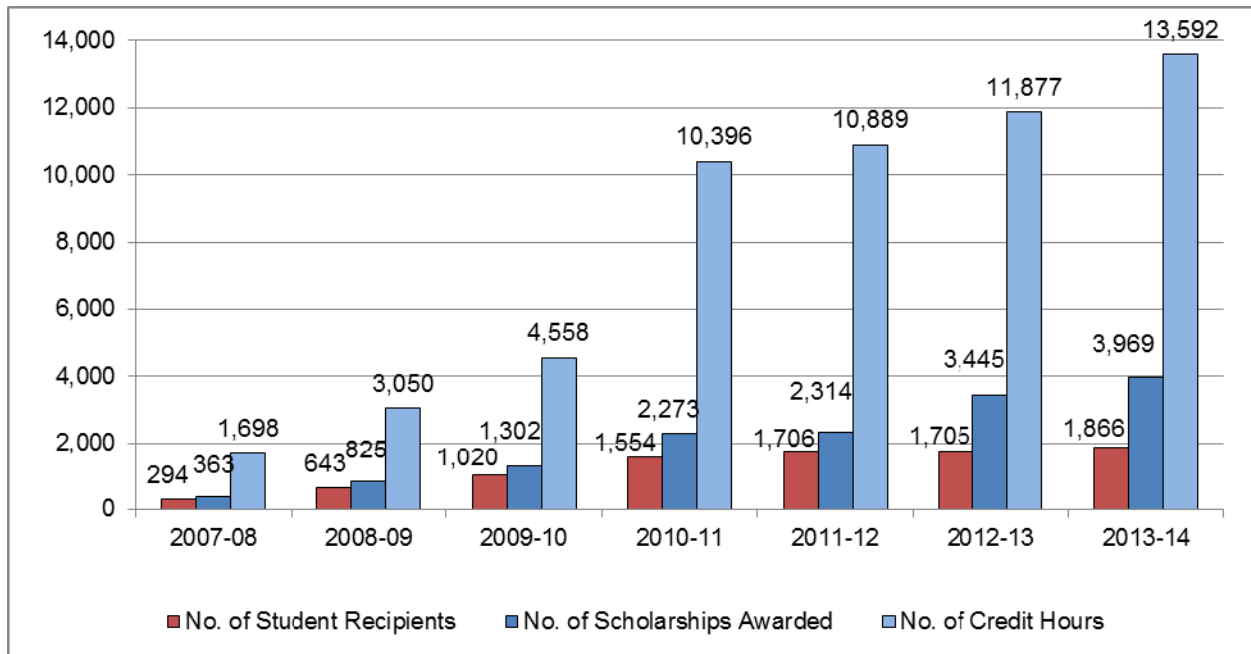
**Growth of ACE Scholarship Program Funding**



*(ACE charts continued on next page)*

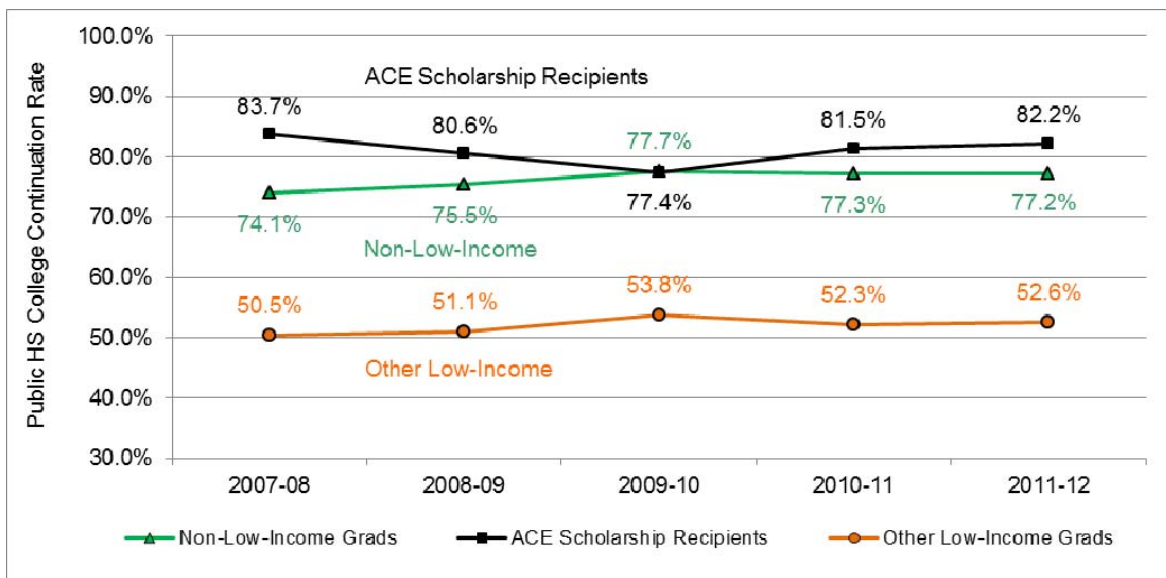
(ACE charts continued)

### Growth of ACE Scholarship Program Awards, Recipients and Credit Hours



Nationally and in Nebraska, students who take college courses while in high school go on to college at higher rates.

### Nebraska Public High School College Continuation Rates - 2007-08 Through 2011-12



## ACE Plus Scholarship Program

The Commission created the ACE Plus scholarship program as part of the federal College Access Challenge Grant program (CACG) in 2010. It is funded solely by the CACG program. This scholarship program picks up where the ACE program ends, by providing scholarships to college students who previously received an ACE scholarship. The main objective is to encourage former ACE students to attend college full time after high school and to help them complete a postsecondary credential. The ACE Plus program provides a \$500 award for a student's freshman year and a \$1,000 scholarship award for their sophomore year.

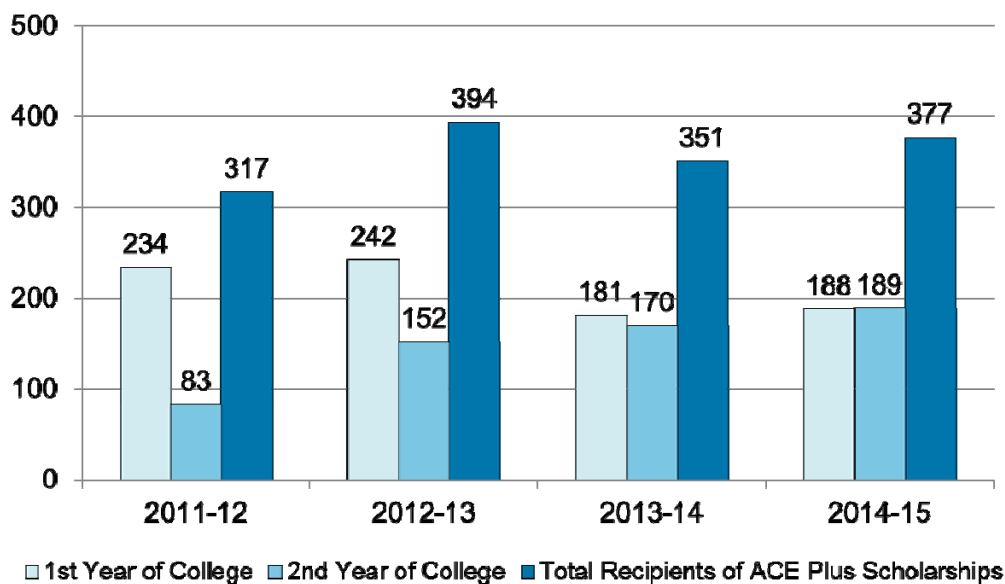
ACE Plus recipients have not only performed well in high school but also have found success in their first year of college. When ACE Plus recipients completed their first year

in college, 80% of them earned above a 3.0 college GPA, with 51% earning grades in the GPA range of 3.5-4.0 during the 2013-14 academic year.

For academic year 2013-14, CCPE utilized \$260,500 in CACG funds to award 351 ACE Plus scholarships (181 first-year awards and 170 second-year awards). For 2014-15, CCPE utilized \$283,000 in CACG funds to award 377 ACE Plus scholarships (188 first-year awards and 189 second-year awards). For 2014-2015, the ACE Plus program was unable to meet the financial needs of 69 applicants totaling \$48,000.

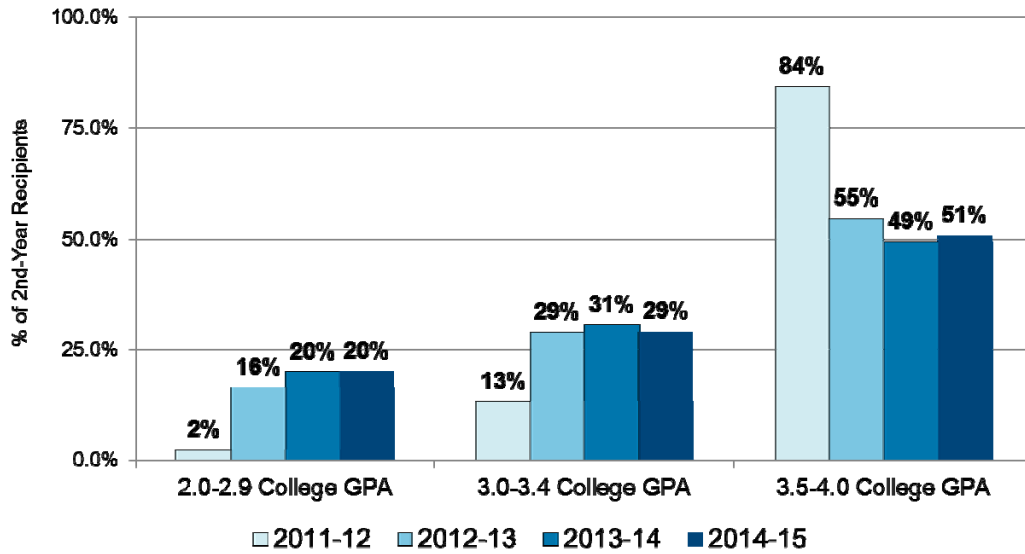
As the federal CACG program comes to an end, the ACE Plus scholarship will no longer be funded after the 2015-16 academic year, unless the State chooses to do so.

**Number of ACE Plus recipients by academic year**

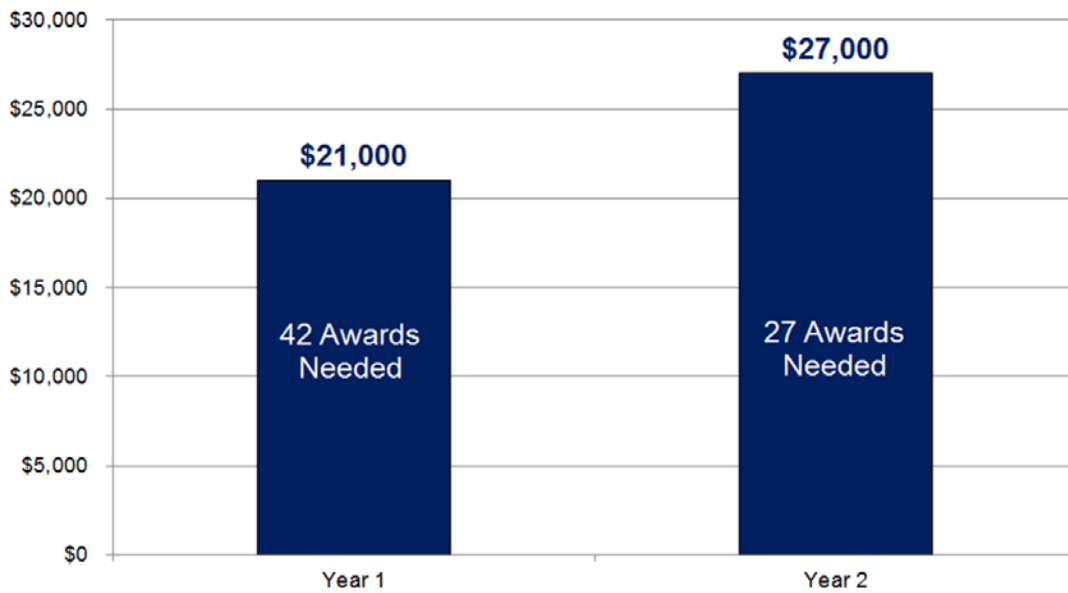


*(ACE Plus charts continued on next page)*

**Freshman Year (College) GPA for ACE Plus Recipients Who Received ACE Plus Scholarships Their Second Year of College (Academic Year 2014–15)**



**Total Unmet Financial Need for Academic Year 2014–15:  
\$48,000 (69 Awards)**



*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, [www.ccpe.ne.gov](http://www.ccpe.ne.gov), under the “Data Collection, Reports, and Presentations” link.**

### **Budget and Financial Analyses**

#### **Postsecondary Education Operating Budget Recommendations for 2015-17**

*(October 2014)*

This is a statutorily required analysis of public institutional budget requests. It includes information about higher education appropriations, affordability, access and accountability, discussions of statewide funding issues, and recommendations. See page 18 of this document for more information.

#### **Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization for 2015-17** *(October 2014)*

This statutorily required report 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 at Curtis. See page 17 for more information.

### **2014 Tuition, Fees, Financial Aid Report** *(September 2014)*

This statutorily required report 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.

Among the report's general findings:

- Nebraskans continue to show they value higher education, despite its rising costs;
- 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 could be provided by the state.

#### **Did you know?**

In 2012-13, Nebraska ranked 33rd among states in need-based student aid grant dollars per full-time undergraduate enrollment. In 2011-12, the state ranked 35th.

*From the "2014 Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid Report."*

## **Academic Analyses**

### **Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls** *(July 2014)*

This report describes the types of distance education courses available to Nebraska residents, what institutions offer distance education, how distance education is delivered and how many students are taking advantage of distance education.

## **Other Analyses, Publications**

### **Excel Workbook for College-Going Rates for Nebraska Public High Schools for the High School Class of 2011-2012** *(October 2013)*

This report presents the estimated college-going rates for each of Nebraska's 276 public high schools that awarded high school diplomas in 2011-12. These estimates are based on data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse.

### **Excel Workbook for College-Going Rates for Nebraska Public High Schools for the High School Class of 2012-2013** *(May 2014)*

This document provides our estimate of college-going rate, by school, for the high school graduating class of 2012-13.

**2014 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report** (March 2014)

This statutorily required annual report provides data to the Nebraska Legislature, with comparative statistics to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three key priorities for Nebraska's postsecondary education system. These priorities 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.

**2014 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska** (September-November 2014)

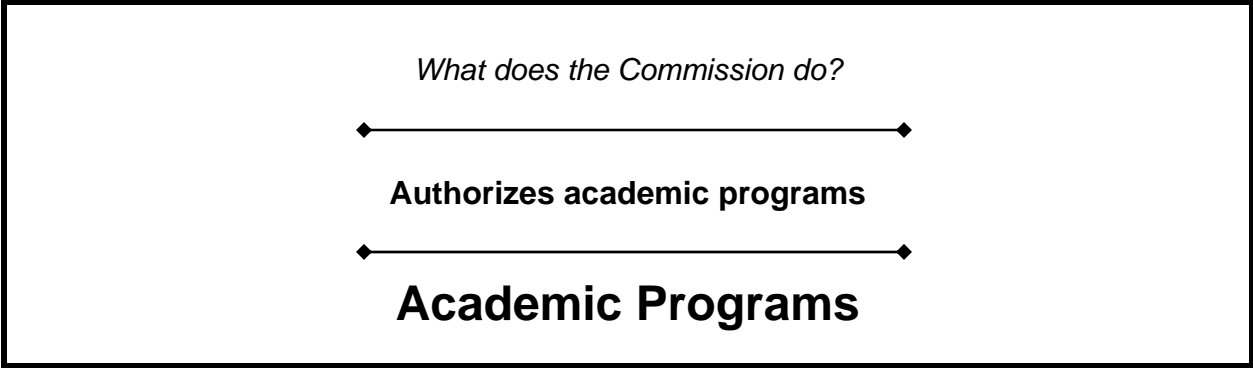
This report, in three sections, uses data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) surveys to provide comparative data for Nebraska's higher education institutions.

**Did you know?**

Degrees in business, education and the health professions accounted for 49.5% of the degrees awarded by Nebraska's public and private institutions in 2012-13 and for 45% of the growth in the number of degrees conferred between 2002-02 and 2012-13.

*From the "2014 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska" report.*





### 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 compliance with the *Comprehensive Plan* and to prevent unnecessary duplication.

During the 2013-14 biennium, the Commission reviewed 339 existing programs. Of those, 256 were approved to continue, eight were referred to the institutions for further review or additional information, and 75 were discontinued by the institutions.

The Commission also reviewed 65 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 35 proposals for new academic programs and organizational units at public institutions. One additional program proposal was reviewed but withdrawn by the institution before the Commission took action. Another 62 proposed programs were reviewed and determined to be reasonable and moderate extensions of existing programs, thus requiring no action by the Commission.

**Did you know?**

More than 137,000 students (duplicated headcount) are enrolled in online courses through Nebraska postsecondary institutions.

*From the 2014 “Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls” report*

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

**Out-of-state institution  
authorized in the 2014 biennium:**

**University of South Dakota** (Vermillion, S.D.)

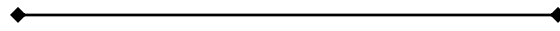
In April 2013, approved to offer Master of Arts in Speech-Pathology, Reading Recovery (three graduate courses), and Science, Culture and History of the Missouri River (one undergraduate course).

In addition, 43 new programs or courses, and one new campus, were approved for institutions previously authorized to operate.

*What does the Commission do?*



**Approves proposals for facilities**



## **Capital Construction/Facilities**

The Commission has three major responsibilities related to capital construction projects at public postsecondary education institutions.

**The first responsibility** is to review, monitor and approve or disapprove capital construction projects that use more than \$2 million in tax funds to construct facilities, or more than \$85,000 per year in tax funds to operate and maintain. Disapproved projects cannot receive State funds for construction or ongoing operating and maintenance costs.

From January 2013 through December 2014, the Commission reviewed 10 capital construction project proposals by the institutions. Of these requests, one operating and maintenance request for \$575,266 in State appropriations was withdrawn. A second proposal was revised to reduce the size of the facility by 13,636 gross square feet, which resulted in a \$3,735,600 reduction in State appropriation.

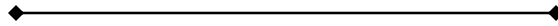
**The second responsibility** is to review revenue bond projects and make recommendations to the Legislature regarding their approval or disapproval. There were no revenue bond proposals

submitted. LB 546, passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor during the 2014 session, removed the Commission from this process.

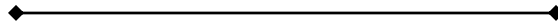
**The third responsibility** is to review the biennial capital construction requests of the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture and the Nebraska State College System. The Commission makes these recommendations to the Governor and Legislature at the same time it makes recommendations on biennial operating budget requests.

The Commission recommends a list, in priority order, of approved capital construction projects eligible for state funding. Only those projects that were approved by the governing boards and the Commission and include a request for State funding are considered. The Commission has identified ongoing routine maintenance and addressing deferred repair as statewide facilities priorities for the 2015-17 biennium. To read the report, *2015-2017 Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization*, go to the Commission's website, [www.ccpe.ne.gov](http://www.ccpe.ne.gov), and click the "Data Collection, Reports, and Presentations" link.

*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 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 promote consistency with the *Comprehensive Plan* and 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 2014, the Commission reviewed 56 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 56 requests, 27 were expanded requests. The Commission:

- Recommended new general funds for 20 of the requests;
- Recommended some new general funds for three requests;
- Recommended no general funds for three requests;

Furthermore, of the 56 requests, there were 15 requests that were part of the continuation budget recommendation. Fourteen requests were for new building operating and maintenance funds. The total dollars for institutional new and expanded requests for the biennium was \$72,706,453.

The full report, *2015-2017 Institutional Operating Budget Recommendations*, is located on the Commission's website, [www.ccpe.ne.gov](http://www.ccpe.ne.gov), under the "Data Collection, Reports, and Presentations" link.

*Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education*

**Promoting high quality, ready access and efficient use of  
resources in Nebraska higher education**

## **Projects, Accomplishments and Updates**

### **Ongoing Initiatives**

#### **College Access Challenge Grant**

The Governor has designated the CCPE as the State's administrator of the federal College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACG). The CACG is a five-year formula grant program designed to increase the number of underrepresented students who enter and remain in postsecondary education. In 2010, the CCPE received \$1.5 million in grant funds from the CACG. The Commission has used these funds to support many Nebraska groups and initiatives, including: the Access College Early grant program; the ACE Plus scholarship program; Western Rural Schools Initiative; Central Plains Center for Services, in western Nebraska; Omaha Public Schools; EducationQuest Foundation, based in Lincoln; Ho-Chunk Community Development Corp., which is affiliated with the Winnebago Tribe; Nebraska Methodist College; Grace University; and the Bright Futures Foundation, in Omaha; Metropolitan Community College; and Creighton University.

#### **Improving Teacher Quality: State Grants Program**

The Commission continues to award Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) state grants to Nebraska's innovative leaders in education. The grants are funded under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act (Title IIA). Grants are not awarded to individuals, but to partnerships formed by local, high-need educational agencies and a Nebraska college or university. These partnerships design and produce professional development activities to improve the skills of K-12 teachers, paraprofessionals and principals.

The total amount of funds available to Nebraska for awards in 2012-13 was \$283,552. The total amount recommended for the four projects that received funding was \$284,327. (While this exceeded the original available amount, previously funded projects often return funds at the end of the grant, funds that can be applied to the next round of grants.)

For 2013-14, a review panel recommended and the Commission awarded \$298,638 for four projects: three that focused on areas of

science and math and one that focused on literacy.

The ITQ program continues to focus on professional development activities for in-service teachers, especially those teaching in shortage areas and those who don't hold an endorsement in the subject area in which they are teaching. In some instances, ITQ funds are awarded for activities that address one or both challenges. Projects that address the needs of low-performing schools or model the use of technology are given priority. For more information about the ITQ program, visit [www.ccpe.ne.gov](http://www.ccpe.ne.gov) and click on the "Improving Teacher Quality Grants" link on the left-hand side of the homepage.

## **New Initiatives**

### **SARA**

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is an agreement among member states that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. SARA is overseen by a National Council and administered by four regional education compacts — the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), in Nebraska's case. In 2013, Nebraska legislation designated the Coordinating Commission as the state's portal agency for SARA, meaning Nebraska institutions apply to the Commission to participate. Once approved, institutions can offer distance learning courses to students from states also participating in SARA. Without SARA, institutions must apply to each state before they offer distance-learning courses to its residents. With SARA, Nebraska institutions will save thousands of dollars in application fees, as well as the time and effort that goes into the application process. In Nebraska's first three months as part of SARA, 10 institutions have been approved to participate.

### **Increased Community College duties**

As a result of legislation from the 2013 session, the Coordinating Commission assumed new responsibilities related to the distribution of State allocations to the Community Colleges. The Commission chairs the newly created Nebraska Community College Student Performance

and Occupation Education Grant Program, for which the state's Community Colleges receive \$500,000 annually. Duties associated with this responsibility include annually developing the Request for Proposals, receiving proposals, organizing review committee meetings, certifying grant amounts, disbursing grant funds, and receiving and distributing annual reports of outcomes from grant recipients.

The Commission also assumed responsibility for the process of distributing State aid to the Community Colleges. The Commission must certify data relating to Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) students and Reimbursable Education Units (REUs) for each college. This certification process includes verifying the courses to be counted and the weighting of those courses by reviewing all courses approved by the colleges. The certified data is audited by outside auditors and sent to the Commission to be used in the Community College state aid distribution formula. The Commission distributed the formula-allocated dollars to each Community College in 10 equal payments over the course of the fiscal year.

### **Updated peer groups**

In 2014, the Coordinating Commission approved updated peer groups for the state's Community Colleges and State Colleges – an important process not only for the Commission and its work, but for the institutions as well. State statutes and the state's *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education* require the

Commission to provide a list of peer institutions for each of Nebraska's 13 public postsecondary institutions. The Commission uses peer groups for budget and academic program review, as well as for other comparisons that aid in Commission decision-making. The institutions often use their peer groups in similar ways as the Commission — for example, to compare academic offerings, enrollment trends, and funding. The Commission has now begun the process of selecting new peer groups for the University of Nebraska institutions.

### **Supplemental data automation**

In 2014, the Commission automated its supplemental data collection process. Much of this data is featured in the annual *Nebraska Postsecondary Enrollment, Tuition & Fees, and Financial Aid Supplemental Data Report*. The *Supplemental Data Report* serves a variety of essential functions for the Commission. In addition to providing the main data source for various national surveys, this information, collected directly from each of Nebraska's public postsecondary institutions, aids the Commission with many of its own analyses and reviews. Externally, the Nebraska Legislative Fiscal Office relies on this report for its annual evaluation of the state's public institutions. Automating the collection of institutional data for this report increases the ease of access to this information, as it is located in one central database; improves data quality because the system runs a series of data validations; and allows the Commission to conduct long-term analysis of the data.

### **Commission Update newsletter**

In 2013, the Commission began publishing *Commission Update*, a PDF newsletter periodically distributed via email to higher-education colleagues and other interested parties in Nebraska. *Update* highlights the Commission's recent activities and accomplishments.

### **New to the Commission**

#### **Commissioners**

The Governor appointed five new Commissioners during the 2013-14 biennium:

- Dr. John Bernthal, Lincoln, District 1
- Dr. Deborah Frison, Omaha, District 2
- Dwayne Probyn, Papillion, At-large
- Lori Warner, South Sioux City, District 3

The Legislature must confirm all appointees. As of December 2014, only Dr. Bernthal awaits confirmation, as he was appointed when the Legislature was not in session.

### **Employees**

The Coordinating Commission welcomed a number of new employees during the last biennium:

- Ben Civic, College Access Challenge Grant Program Director, started December 2012
- James Schiltz, Data Analyst, started August 2013
- Jill Heese, Research Coordinator, started October 2013
- Gary Timm, Chief Finance and Administrative Officer, started January 2014
- Dr. Michael Baumgartner, Executive Director, started September 2014



