

DATE: January 29, 2019
TO: Clerk of the Legislature
FROM: Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education,
Gary Timm, Chief Finance and Administrative Officer
SUBJECT: Total Number of Applicants for Public Benefits and the Number of
Applicants Rejected Pursuant to Such Sections

Nebraska Opportunity Grant

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1907(2), a student receiving a grant from the Nebraska Opportunity Grant must qualify for financial assistance from the US Department of Education (ED) by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students must be U.S. citizens to receive financial assistance from ED; therefore all students receiving a grant from the Nebraska Opportunity Grant must be U.S. citizens or eligible non-citizens.

The U.S. Department of Education verifies the citizenship status of students who apply for federal aid. It does this through data matches with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) when a student completes the FAFSA. All students receiving federal aid must complete this form. If the data matches are unable to verify citizenship status, comments are generated and passed on to school officials. As a result, this federal verification satisfies the state requirement of an "equivalent program designated by the United States Department of Homeland Security" under Neb. Rev. Stat. § 4-112.

Access College Early Scholarship Program

Students receiving grants from the Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program are high school students who have not completed the federal FAFSA. As a result of LB 403 (2009), the Commission now requires all ACE applicants to complete the U.S. Citizenship Attestation Form developed by the Department of Administrative Services.

In 2018, 4,868 students applied for an ACE scholarship. Seven applicants were rejected due to not being verified through SAVE as an eligible noncitizen.

Community College Gap Assistance Program

The Community College Gap Assistance Program provides financial aid to community college students taking non-credit courses that could lead to jobs in high-need fields. These are low-income students who would not be eligible for federal financial aid because, although they're enrolled in college, they are not enrolled in courses for credit that lead directly to a degree.

In 2018, 190 students applied for the Community College Gap Assistance program. No applicants were rejected due to not being verified through SAVE as an eligible noncitizen.