



**2024 EducationQuest Symposium
Tuesday, April 16, 2024
Nebraska Innovation Campus**

AGENDA

(as of April 9, 2024 – subject to change)

8:00 – 9:00 Check-in (1st floor) and Continental Breakfast (2nd floor)

9:00 – 10:00 Welcome & Exploring the Opportunities and Challenges of Universal FAFSA
(Auditorium – 2nd Floor)

Nebraska recently joined 12 other states that have passed Universal FAFSA to boost financial aid applications and college enrollment. Representatives from the Nebraska Department of Education will be on hand to offer the latest information about implementation. They will be joined by school counselors from Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas, who will share their experiences supporting implementation in their states.

Presenters:

- MorraLee Keller, Senior Director-Strategic Planning, National College Attainment Network, Washington, DC
- Lane Carr, Administrator-Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Nebraska Department of Education, Lincoln, NE
- Donna Hoffman, School Counseling Specialist-Career, Technical, & Adult Education, Nebraska Department of Education, Lincoln, NE

Panelists:

- Kristi Lawson, School Counselor, Jewel M. Summer High School, Kentwood, LA
- Patricia Patel, College & Career Counselor, Skidmore-Tynan High School, Skidmore, TX
- Kalene Heaton, College Counselor, Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, IL

10:00 – 10:10 Break

10:10 – 10:50 Breakout Sessions

AI Tools in Education: Streamlining Workload (Room A1/A2)

Explore the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools that can lighten the workload of educators and help guide students through college access. Learn how AI can revolutionize tasks like crafting recommendation letters and exploring career opportunities.

Presenters:

- Noel Erskine, Technology Coordinator, Norris School District 160
- Jason Gault, Technology Integration Specialist, Norris School District 160

Pathways of Hope: Navigating College for Undocumented and First-Gen Families (Room B1/B2)

Unlock essential resources and practical tips to support immigrant, undocumented, and first-generation students. Gain valuable insights from panelists to make a lasting impact in your role. *This session will be repeated.*

Presenters:

- Elizabeth Rodriguez, Welcoming & Belonging Director, Centro Hispano
- Yajaira Gonzalez, MPA, Coordinator, Dreamer's Pathway Scholarship Program, UNO
- Abel Covarrubias, Director, Nebraska College Preparatory Academy, UNL

- Joseline Reyna, Community Engagement Coordinator, Leadership Unlimited

Empowerment through Engagement: Hands-On Activities (Room B3)

Experience firsthand activities to breathe life into your teaching and empower your students toward success. The 2024 Nebraska Teacher of the Year will share how to make a difference in the classroom. *This session will be repeated.*

Presenter: Scott Phillips, Teacher, Aurora Middle School

Mastering the 'New' FAFSA: Tips and Tricks (Room A3)

Get the latest intel on the 2024-25 FAFSA, and gain invaluable insight into the new calculation methodology and process that will help your students complete the form.

Presenters:

- MorraLee Keller, Senior Director-Strategic Planning, National College Attainment Network, Washington, DC

Community Engagement: Making the Ask (Room D)

Learn effective strategies to engage your community and expand your school's college access activities that will help build lasting relationships.

Presenter: Wynter Davis, Donor Services Advisor, Omaha Community Foundation

10:50 – 11:00 **Break**

11:00 – 11:40 **Breakout Sessions**

Universal FAFSA Success Stories: Best Practices (Room A1/A2)

Learn from Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas school counselors about successful deployment strategies to boost FAFSA completion rates and navigate the universal FAFSA requirements. *This session will be repeated.*

Presenters:

- Kristi Lawson, School Counselor, Jewel M. Summer High School, Kentwood, LA
- Patricia Patel, College & Career Counselor, Skidmore-Tynan High School, Skidmore, TX
- Kalene Heaton, College Counselor, Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, IL

Rise Above the Chaos! Navigating Self-Care Amidst the Storm of Others' Needs (Room A3)

Explore the art of self-preservation amidst the relentless demands of those around us. Discover strategies that allow you to cherish the invaluable helping work you do, unearth pearls of wisdom in your quest for mentors and resources, and unlock the secrets to setting boundaries that safeguard your precious time.

Presenters:

- Katy Pickel, LIMHP Counselor, HopeSpoke
- Christina Posvar, MA, LIMHP, LADC, CPC, HopeSpoke

Pathways of Hope: Navigating College for Undocumented and First-Gen Families (Room B1/B2)

Unlock essential resources and practical tips to support immigrant, undocumented, and first-generation students. Gain valuable insights from panelists to make a lasting impact in your role. *This is a repeat of the 10.10 a.m. session.*

Presenters:

- Elizabeth Rodriguez, Welcoming & Belonging Director, Centro Hispano
- Yajaira Gonzalez, MPA, Coordinator, Dreamer's Pathway Scholarship Program, UNO
- Abel Covarrubias, Director, Nebraska College Preparatory Academy, UNL

- Joseline Reyna, Community Engagement Coordinator, Leadership Unlimited

Empowerment through Engagement: Hands-On Activities (Room B3)

Experience firsthand activities to breathe life into your teaching and empower your students toward success. The 2024 Nebraska Teacher of the Year will share how to make a difference in the classroom. *This is a repeat of the 10.10 a.m. session.*

Presenter: Scott Phillips, Teacher, Aurora Middle School

Hot Jobs in Nebraska: High-Demand Careers (Room D)

Gain insight from the Nebraska Department of Labor on high-demand, high-skill, and high-wage jobs in Nebraska, equipping you to guide students toward promising future opportunities.

Presenter: Jodie Meyer, Research Analyst, Nebraska Department of Labor

11:40 – 12:10 College Access Expo (2nd Floor – north hallway)

Learn about programs and services offered by a variety of Nebraska-based organizations to help you with your college access efforts. Think of it as a college-access trade show!

Participating organizations:

- **Central Plains Center for Services**

In partnership with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, we administer our PALS Coaching, Education & Training Voucher (ETV), and Opportunity Passport (OPP) financial literacy programs across Nebraska. Our services are grounded in one-on-one relationships with youth, young adults, and their families and are focused on their strengths, goals, and future.

ETV funds can provide up to \$2,600 per year for tuition, books, and fees to eligible students for up to five years. The PALS program provides transition and independent living services, while our OPP program provides a match-savings, asset-building program. PALS and OPP are available to current and former foster youth, youth experiencing homelessness, pregnant and parenting youth, and youth experiencing or who are vulnerable to human trafficking.

- **Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education**

The CCPE oversees programs like the Nebraska Opportunity Grant (NOG), FAFSA Completion Initiative, Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship, and the Community College Gap Assistance Program. The agency also assists in developing state financial aid strategies. In 2023-24, the Commission awarded Nebraska resident college students nearly \$27 million in need-based financial aid. Commission responsibilities and annual reports can be found at <https://ccpe.nebraska.gov>.

- **EducationQuest Foundation**

Your school or agency has likely worked with EducationQuest, but are you aware of *all* the programs and services EducationQuest offers? Check out our *free* college planning services, need-based scholarship programs, college access grants for high schools, college access resources for middle schools, and outreach services for community agencies.

- **EducationQuest Foundation: Latino Achievement Team**

Did you know EducationQuest Foundation offers our programs and services in Spanish? Learn more about our free college planning services, publications, and outreach services for community agencies.

- **Nebraska Department of Labor**

The Labor Market Information Division, in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, produces data about employment levels and trends, wages and earnings, estimates of labor availability, industrial and occupational projections, business staffing patterns, and more. This information can help individuals make informed career choices, help policymakers allocate funding, help employers establish job descriptions and wage ranges, and help educators tailor programs for occupations in demand. Stop by to learn more about our office's free career planning resources, including H3 Occupations, Career Ladder Posters, STEM Posters, and more!

- **NEST 529 College Savings Plan**

NEST not only makes saving for college affordable and flexible, but it also has unique benefits. Assets can be used at universities, community colleges, tech schools, and graduate schools nationwide - and even some institutions abroad. Pay for tuition and fees, books, supplies, certain housing and food expenses, and more! Families can deposit a lump sum or save any amount monthly from their paycheck or personal bank account.

- **TeamMates+ Mentoring Program**

TeamMates+ Mentoring is designed to provide post-secondary resources to support students while they pursue post-secondary education. The TeamMates+ Mentoring Program matches a community volunteer or campus staff/faculty with a college student to serve as a one-to-one mentor throughout their college journey.

12:10 – 1:10 **Lunch** (Banquet Hall – 2nd Floor)

- Award presentation from the *American College Application Campaign*
- Inductions into the *EducationQuest Hall of Fame*
 - Connie Sorensen-Birk, English Specialist (retired), TRIO Project Achieve, UNO (2023)
 - DeMoine Adams, Chief Executive Officer, TeamMates Mentoring Program (2024)
- **Design Your Future with Mike Smith**
Presenter: Mike Smith, Co-Founder, Rabble Mill, Lincoln, NE

Join Rabble Mill Co-Founder Mike Smith for a journey through design-thinking tools that will help you rediscover your passion for education. Learn how your renewed enthusiasm can empower youth to navigate life's challenges with resilience and purpose.

1:10 – 1:20 **Break**

1:20 – 2:00 **Breakout Sessions**

Universal FAFSA Success Stories: Best Practices (Room A1/A2)

Learn from Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas school counselors about successful deployment strategies to boost FAFSA completion rates and navigate the universal FAFSA requirements. *This is a repeat of the 11 a.m. session.*

Presenters:

- Kristi Lawson, School Counselor, Jewel M. Summer High School, Kentwood, LA
- Patricia Patel, College & Career Counselor, Skidmore-Tynan High School, Skidmore, TX
- Kalene Heaton, College Counselor, Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, IL

Short-Term Programs: Exploring Opportunities (Room A3)

Discover the benefits of short-term programs available in Nebraska, from trades to apprenticeships, providing diverse pathways for students.

Presenters:

- Katie Cameron, School Counselor, Benson High School Magnet
- Scott Foster, Workforce Developer, City of Lexington

Workshop: Design Your Future with Mike Smith (Room B1/B2)

Rabble Mill Co-Founder Mike Smith will build on his lunch presentation to help educators and counselors rediscover their passion for helping youth succeed.

Presenter: Mike Smith, Co-Founder, Rabble Mill, Lincoln, NE

Bridges Out of Poverty: Building Community (Room B3)

Join the Food Bank of Lincoln's initiative to foster a community-wide effort to build Bridges Out of Poverty. Learn how collaboration, a common language, and understanding can lead to meaningful community change.

Presenter: Georgann Roth, Community Resource Manager, Food Bank of Lincoln

Steps to College: Empowering Families (Room C)

Unleash the potential of families in the college-going process with EducationQuest's innovative program. Dive into pre-made resources and hear from counselors experienced in deploying these sessions.

Presenters:

- Kimberley Brown, Senior College Planning Specialist – Omaha, EducationQuest Foundation
- Kristin Ageton, Director of College Access, EducationQuest Foundation

Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Education (Room D)

Equip yourself to support underrepresented students with confidence. Gain strategies, resources, and insights to create a nurturing environment conducive to post-secondary success.

Presenter: Brittney Hodges-Bolkovac, Executive Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Lincoln Public Schools

2:00 – 2:10 **Break**

2:10 – 3:00 **Preparing Students for the Transition to College (Banquet Hall – 2nd Floor)**

Gain a better understanding of the hurdles awaiting college students and uncover actionable strategies to ensure a smooth transition. Get insight from a panel of college professionals who have witnessed successful transitions firsthand.

Panelists:

- Kristy Saunders, Director – Husker Hub, University of Nebraska – Lincoln
- Dr. Erin Hoffman, Vice President for Student Life, Nebraska Wesleyan University
- Dr. Phip Ross, Supervisor of Transitions & Tutoring, Southeast Community College

Event ends

3:00 (Optional) - EducationQuest staff will be available to answer questions about the 2024 *College Access Grant* application. (Room D)