Funding college access activities

This summer, EducationQuest selected 22 Nebraska high schools as recipients of College Access Grants. This funding will help the schools develop and enhance activities designed to help students pursue education beyond high school. Learn about the recipient schools – and other statewide college access efforts – in this issue of Aspire.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Apply2College Campaign  
FAFSA Completion Initiative  
NEST Partnership  
EducationQuest App  
8th Grade Campus Visit Grants  
Reality Check  
College Access Grants  
EducationQuest Scholarship Program  
Get Social Scholarship Winners  
2018 Year in Review

Above: As part of a College Access Grant-funded activity at Beatrice High School, these eight young professionals talked to students about their journey after high school and why they chose their career path. The panel included a physician’s assistant, registered nurse, financial advisor, funeral director, local business owner, and three teachers. Five of the panelists were Beatrice High School graduates.

2018 Year In Review
See pages 8-12 for an overview of EducationQuest’s statewide college access efforts this past year.

EducationQuest.org
MESSAGE From Liz

A call to Nebraska high school counselors…

Your intervention can help your students get money for college

In Nebraska, 38 percent of high school graduates in the Class of 2018 didn’t complete and submit their FAFSA. This means they missed their opportunity for part of $2.6 billion in free money for college.

And…of that 38 percent, 4,154 students were Pell Grant-eligible. When you consider that the average Pell Grant in Nebraska is $3,697, those students left over $15 million on the table.*

As you know, EducationQuest plays a significant role in helping Nebraska students and families complete the FAFSA each year, but there’s only so much we can do. This is where YOU come in!

By joining Nebraska’s FAFSA Completion Initiative, you can access FAFSA completion status updates on individual students and provide help to those who need it. These might be students who never started a FAFSA, never completed it, got hung up in the verification process, or encountered other issues. Please be assured that you will not have access to student or parent financial or other personal information.

A big thank you to the 184 Nebraska high schools that have already signed up for the Initiative. I’m excited to see that number increase.

Read the article on page 5 for more details about the FAFSA Completion Initiative and how to sign up. You’ll also find details under “College Focus for Seniors” in the Professionals section at EducationQuest.org.

Thank you for all you do to help your students make college possible. As always, we’re here to provide assistance whenever needed.

*Source: nerdwallet.com/blog/2018-fafsa-study

Liz S. Koop
President & CEO
EducationQuest Foundation

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Liz S. Koop
President & CEO
EducationQuest Foundation

Published biannually for education leaders in Nebraska.
Twenty-two high schools awarded College Access Grants

This summer, EducationQuest awarded College Access Grants to 22 Nebraska high schools to help them develop or enhance programs designed to increase the number of students who pursue education beyond high school.

The schools will share $580,000 in grant funds over the next four years. The amount each school receives is based on enrollment.

The high schools will use the grants to fund activities such as college visits, financial aid sessions, scholarship searches, career exploration, ACT test preparation, and completion of college applications. The grant program also promotes involvement with families and businesses to help ensure the program's success.

The recipient schools have set goals to increase their college-going rates by approximately 10 percentage points over the next four years.

EducationQuest awards College Access Grants to Nebraska high schools every two years and has awarded 131 grants to 89 high schools since the program began in 2006.

Lexington High School students and parents experienced a visit to University of Nebraska at Kearney this fall through funding from the school’s College Access Grant.

2018 College Access Grant Recipients

$20,000 A YEAR FOR 4 YEARS
Omaha Burke High School
Omaha Central High School

$10,000 A YEAR FOR 4 YEARS
Lexington High School
Waverly High School

$7,500 A YEAR FOR 4 YEARS
Lakeview High School
McCook High School
Schuyler Central High School
York High School

$5,000 A YEAR FOR 4 YEARS
Auburn High School
Chadron High School
Falls City High School
Gibbon High School
Gordon-Rushville High School
Madison High School
Oakland-Craig Public Schools
Valentine High School

$2,500 A YEAR FOR 4 YEARS
Humboldt-Table Rock-Steinauver Public Schools
Minatare High School
Pender Public Schools
Sumner-Eddyville-Miller Public School
Sterling High School
Verdigre Public School
Seniors at over 150 Nebraska high schools received hands-on help with their college applications this fall thanks to their schools’ participation in Nebraska’s annual Apply2College Campaign held this fall.

During the EducationQuest-sponsored campaign, participating schools held college application events during the school day where school staff, volunteers, and college reps helped seniors through the application process.

Results submitted by participating schools as of November 19 show that 7,439 seniors submitted 12,233 applications to 91 colleges.

Apply2College is part of the American College Application Campaign sponsored by the American Council on Education. All 50 states participate in this national effort.
High schools encouraged to participate in

**FAFSA Completion Initiative**

The FAFSA is critical to ensuring college access for high school students.

By participating in the FAFSA Completion Initiative, Nebraska high schools can access FAFSA completion status updates on individual students and provide help to those who need it.

Specifically, schools can learn students’ FAFSA completion status (not submitted, complete or incomplete), and FAFSA submittal and processed dates. They can also learn if a student was flagged for verification.

To enroll in the FAFSA Completion Initiative, contact:

**Ritchie Morrow**  
Financial Aid Officer for Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education.  
Call: 402.472.0032  
Or email: ritchie.morrow@nebraska.gov.

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**NEW APP**

**will help students stay on track to college**

EducationQuest has developed a new app that gives students easy access to college-prep tools like *Activities Resume, College Profiles, College Timeline, Reality Check,* and *ScholarshipQuest.* There’s also a calendar that will guide them through college-planning steps - and they can personalize it with their own tasks.

The EducationQuest App is available in the App Store and GooglePlay.

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**Reality Check**

Revamped tool helps students look to the future

EducationQuest recently revamped *Reality Check,* a tool that helps students determine if the career they’re interested in pursuing will pay enough to fund their desired future lifestyle.

*Reality Check* makes students aware of future expenses they’ll encounter (housing, utilities, food, transportation, etc.) and then estimates their future salary based on their career choice. Once they’ve gone through the exercise, they’ll see if they’ll be able to afford their lifestyle, or if they’ll need to make adjustments.

Want to use *Reality Check* with your students? You’ll find it at EducationQuest.org.
8th Grade CAMPUS VISIT GRANTS awarded to 68 schools

Eighth grade students at 68 Nebraska schools will experience a campus visit this school year through funding from 8th Grade Campus Visit Grants awarded by EducationQuest.

The grants will cover the cost of a college visit for each school along with related activities that will help eighth graders get on the path to college.

“By experiencing a campus setting, these students will realize college is possible and will hopefully be motivated to take steps during high school that will make college possible,” said EducationQuest Vice President Eric Drumheller.

For a list of the recipient schools, see “8th Grade Campus Visit Grants” under the Professionals section at EducationQuest.org.

Eighteen students win $529 through NEST promotion

During the 2017-18 school year, EducationQuest partnered with the State Treasurer’s Office, First National Bank, and College Possible Omaha to encourage families with middle school students to save for college through the Nebraska Educational Savings Trust (NEST). NEST is Nebraska’s state-sponsored 529 college savings program.

Through the promotion, families with NEST 529 accounts could enter to win $529 to be deposited into a NEST account. EducationQuest distributed NEST brochures statewide and talked about the promotion during presentations at middle schools.

Last May, 18 students were selected to win $529.

The winners are: Sophia Birch, Crete; Kristen Bullock, Grant; Kolby Casey, Laurel; Connor Christensen, Grand Island; Luke Curry, Shelby; Nathan Delaney, Omaha; Andrew DeMare, Omaha; Lauren Feltner, Omaha; Wesley Havelka, Bennington; Alaina Jenkins, Bellevue; Nathan Johnson, Lincoln; Josie Lahm, Ceresco; Kara Randall, Omaha; Andrew Sellon, Fremont; Noah Stocker, Grand Island; Luke Stroud, Lincoln; Drake Trent, Omaha; and Avery Zurn, Alliance.

This year, EducationQuest is continuing efforts to promote the importance of college savings to middle school students and their families.

When students have money saved specifically for college, their expectation is that they will indeed go to college – and take steps to get there.

Kristin Ageton
EducationQuest Director of College Access
Nebraska nonprofit colleges share $1.55 million in scholarship funds

EducationQuest disbursed $1.55 million in need-based scholarship funds to Nebraska’s 31 nonprofit colleges and universities this fall for distribution to eligible students during the 2018-2019 academic year. The funds are designated for undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need. Each college selects students who will receive scholarships.

Since the EducationQuest Scholarship Program began 19 years ago, EducationQuest has awarded $22.5 million providing 22,400 scholarships.

Colleges receiving funds:
- Bellevue University
- Bryan College of Health Sciences
- Central Community College
- Chadron State College
- Clarkson College
- College of Saint Mary
- Concordia University
- Creighton University
- Doane University
- Hastings College
- Little Priest Tribal College
- Metropolitan Community College
- Midland University
- Mid-Plains Community College
- Nebraska Christian College
- Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture
- Nebraska Indian Community College
- Nebraska Methodist College
- Nebraska Wesleyan University
- Northeast Community College
- Peru State College
- Southeast Community College
- Union College
- University of Nebraska Medical Center
- University of Nebraska at Kearney
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- University of Nebraska at Omaha
- Wayne State College
- Western Nebraska Community College
- York College

Three students were selected this fall to win a $500 Get Social Scholarship. Nicole Schmunk, a senior at Bridgeport High School, Payton Shreves, a senior at Millard South High School, and Heidi Lierz, a senior at Millard West High School.

EducationQuest conducts a drawing for a Get Social Scholarship every time we reach a 250-follower milestone on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Those who follow us – and meet eligibility criteria – can submit an entry form.

Nicole’s name was selected when we reached 7,500 followers on Facebook, Payton Shreve’s name was drawn when we reached 3,500 followers on Twitter, and Heidi’s name was selected when we reached 1,000 followers on Instagram.
This section provides an overview of EducationQuest's college access activities during FY2018.

**EducationQuest Foundation**, headquartered in Lincoln, is a private, nonprofit organization with a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska.

EducationQuest fulfills this mission by providing college planning services and resources, grants for high schools and middle schools, need-based scholarship programs, and web-based tools and information.

### COLLEGE PLANNING SERVICES

During FY2018, EducationQuest helped **73,500** Nebraskans prepare for college through our in-house services and statewide efforts.

**In-house services**

At locations in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, and Scottsbluff, EducationQuest provided free services that helped students:
- research colleges
- find scholarships
- explore careers
- complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- learn about student borrowing and repayment

**Statewide efforts**

We reached students across the state through:
- Fall college fairs in Lincoln and Omaha
- Spring college fairs in Lincoln and Omaha
- Educational Planning Programs (smaller college fairs)
- Financial Aid Programs
- **Apply2College** Campaign
- Financial Aid Updates for school counselors

### COLLEGE PLANNING ACTIVITIES

**Activities (# of occurrences)**

- Financial Aid Programs (283)
- Offsite FAFSA Filings (41)
- Counselor Updates (6)
- 9th & 10th Grade Programs (94)
- College Fair Counties* (5)
- Educational Planning Program Counties (25)

* Spring college fair in South Sioux City was cancelled due to weather.

Apply2College events were held at 147 high schools.

School-based services were provided on a regular basis at 22 locations: six Lincoln Public Schools, seven Omaha Public Schools, Bellevue East, Gibbon, Grand Island Senior High, Hastings, Kearney Public, Lexington, Ralston, Shelton, and Wood River.
**Apply2College Campaign**

Nearly 150 Nebraska high schools held Apply2College events this fall during the school day to help seniors complete college applications. Results compiled as of November 19, 2018, show that 7,439 seniors submitted 12,233 applications to 91 colleges. EducationQuest sponsored the campaign and provided schools with free resources to help make their events a success.

**Outreach Services**

Each year, EducationQuest’s Outreach Services team visits over 100 community agencies to counsel clients about planning and paying for college and to help them complete the FAFSA. They also provide resources for agency staff. During 2018, the team provided services to nearly 7,250 community agency clients. Outreach Services also oversees services and resources for adult learners.

**KnowHow2GO**

The KnowHow2GO program provides four steps 8th, 9th, and 10th grade students should take to make college a reality. EducationQuest promotes these steps through handbooks distributed to all middle schools and high schools and KnowHow2GO activities educators can use with students. During 2018, EducationQuest conducted 94 KnowHow2GO events across the state reaching nearly 5,000 students.

**Look2College**

Look2College, a program for 6th grade students, provides students with an early exploration of careers and college. Resources include an eight-page publication for students and a facilitator guide for educators. During the 2017-18 school year, we conducted 103 Look2College presentations statewide reaching over 3,800 students.

**Spanish Resources**

To serve the needs of Nebraska’s Spanish-speaking population, EducationQuest develops several college planning materials in Spanish. In addition, our bilingual college planning specialists provide one-on-one assistance at our college planning offices, and conduct financial aid and college planning programs in Spanish across the state. During 2018, they served 1,500 students and parents.
NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

EducationQuest funds two need-based scholarship programs that help Nebraskans overcome obstacles to higher education.

EducationQuest Scholarship Program

Through the EducationQuest Scholarship Program, EducationQuest disburses need-based scholarship dollars each year to Nebraska’s nonprofit public and private colleges. The colleges then award the funds to eligible students who demonstrate financial need. In 2018, EducationQuest disbursed $1.55 million that will be disbursed to eligible students during the 2018-2019 academic year.

Reaching Your Potential

The Reaching Your Potential Scholarship Program awards renewable scholarships twice a year to low-income Nebraska students who face obstacles to college. Applicants are referred to the program by community agencies and colleges. In FY18, EducationQuest provided $514,900 in Reaching Your Potential scholarship funds to 108 students.

Recipients of the EducationQuest Scholarship Program and the Reaching Your Potential Scholarship Program.
GRANT PROGRAMS

EducationQuest has two competitive grant programs through which we distribute funds directly to Nebraska schools to promote college access.

College Access Grants for High Schools

Every two years, EducationQuest awards College Access Grants to selected Nebraska high schools to fund college access activities. The award amounts depend on each school’s enrollment. Schools are funded for four years with a goal to increase their college-going rate by at least 10 percentage points.

In the summer of 2018, EducationQuest selected 22 high schools to receive College Access Grants (see a list of recipients on page 3). The schools will share $580,000 in grant funds over the next four years.

8th Grade Campus Visit Grants

Each year, EducationQuest awards 8th Grade Campus Visit Grants to schools that serve eighth grade students to fund a campus visit and other college-access activities for eighth graders. In the fall of 2018, EducationQuest selected 68 schools to receive grants. For a list of recipient schools, see the Professionals section at EducationQuest.org.

WEB-BASED RESOURCES

During 2018, EducationQuest developed or revamped college planning tools that are available at EducationQuest.org:

College Timeline - Spells out steps high school students should take throughout the year to plan for college. It allows students to add their own tasks, get reminders when it’s time to complete tasks, and check off tasks when they’re complete.

College Focus for Seniors - Gives high school counselors easy access to resources they can use to help seniors apply to college, create an FSA ID, complete the FAFSA, and celebrate College Signing Day. It also guides them to the FAFSA Completion Initiative.

Reality Check - Helps students determine if their career interests will match their desired future lifestyle. We revamped the tool to give it a fresh new look and improved functionality.

Social Media

EducationQuest regularly shares college planning tips via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Over the past year, our followers significantly increased due much in part to our new Get Social Scholarship (see page 7).

Facebook followers increased from 6,626 to 7,334.
Twitter followers grew from 2,734 to 3,327.
Instagram followers increased from 312 to 927.
To increase college access during FY18, EducationQuest partnered with:

- Nebraska Department of Education and Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to increase the number of students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- University of Nebraska and Nebraska State Colleges to provide financial aid training during their Counselor Update sessions for Nebraska high school counselors.
- Nebraska Educational Television to promote college access by airing EducationQuest commercials during championship high school sports and University of Nebraska women’s volleyball.
- Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education to increase the number of students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Nebraska Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers to coordinate Educational Planning Programs at high schools statewide featuring college representatives.
- California-based Families In Schools to provide Transition to College curriculum training for high school counselors. The curriculum targets first-generation and low-income students and families.
- State Treasurer’s Office, First National Bank, and College Possible Omaha to encourage families with middle school students to save for college through the Nebraska Educational Savings Trust (NEST) College Savings Plan.

LOOKING AHEAD

Here are a few of the college access efforts slated for Fiscal Year 2019:

- Improve ScholarshipQuest, our online database of over 2,000 Nebraska-based scholarships.
- Expand partnerships that will help Nebraska become a top-10 state in the number of FAFSAs filed.
- Continue to work with Families In Schools to increase parent engagement in the transition to college for first-generation, low-income students.