

2018 COLLEGE ACCESS NEBRASKA

Successful college access activities from Nebraska high schools



This publication is produced every two years for Nebraska high schools.

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANTS

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANTS

EducationQuest Foundation created the *College Access Grants* program to help Nebraska high schools develop and enhance college access efforts. EducationQuest awards grants every two years, and schools are funded for four years. Grant amounts range from \$2,500 to \$20,000 per year depending on the high school's enrollment.

Since 2006, 86 *College Access Grants* totaling over \$4 million have been awarded to 74 high schools. (See pages 12-13 for a list of recipient schools.)

The goal of the program is for recipient high schools to increase their college-going rate by 10 percentage points over the four-year funding period.

IMPACTING THE STATE'S COLLEGE-GOING RATE

Nebraska's college-going rate is **71 percent**. This number reflects a steady increase over the last eight years. Still, disparities in enrollment and educational attainment by income status, gender, and ethnicity highlight the ever-present need to close these gaps and thus continue to raise our state's college-going rate. EducationQuest's *College Access Grants* program is dedicated to this effort and is proud to partner with Nebraska high schools.

Source: Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, 2017 Higher Education Progress Report



*The goal of College Access Grants is for recipient high schools to increase their college-going rate by **10 percentage points** over the four-year funding period.*

THIS PUBLICATION

College Access Nebraska highlights successful activities developed by Nebraska high schools that have received an EducationQuest *College Access Grant*. We encourage your high school to adopt any of these activities to help your students make college a reality.

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COLLEGE CAMPUS VISITS

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

Students will tour at least one Nebraska college or university by December of the students' senior year.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The White House identified college visits as a promising practice to reach more low-income students and bridge the income gap in college access. Campus visits, along with other college preparation programs, will help increase the pool of low-income students qualified for college.

Source: The Executive Office of the President. (2014). Increasing College Opportunity for Low-Income Students: Promising Models and a Call to Action.

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- **Ralston High School** customizes campus visits around the career interests of their students by partnering with local colleges and area businesses. Students visit a business of interest and then a college campus that offers coursework for related careers. Finally, students are offered an opportunity to participate in a brief training to receive certification in a skill of their chosen field.
- **Malcom High School** takes every student on a college visit and has observed a change in school culture now that students are touring campuses earlier in their high school career. The counselor cites an increase in college awareness in 9th and 10th grade students as well as more support from parents, teachers, administrators, and board members.
- Students from **Crete High School** interested in attending a community college have the opportunity to visit the campus, take the Accuplacer exam, and receive individual advising the same day.
- **Wisner-Pilger High School's** faculty serve as chaperones on campus visits allowing teachers to receive up-to-date information about the college and thus continue the college dialogue in the classroom.
- Students of **Omaha Northwest High Magnet School** were accompanied on their campus visit by school administrators. The experience emphasized the importance of college-access programming, and the administrators quickly became allies in the promotion of post-secondary education.
- Each 9th-12th grade student at **East Butler High School** attends two campus visits to see a full spectrum of college options and start thinking about their path to college earlier.



The White House identified college visits as a promising practice to reach more low-income students and bridge the income gap in college access.

DUAL-CREDIT COURSES

Nebraska's Access College Early Scholarship pays tuition and mandatory fees for eligible Nebraska low-income students taking dual-enrollment courses. About 1,900 students participated in the 2015-16 academic year. Most recent data shows that 82 percent of public high school Senior ACE scholars in 2013-14 enrolled in college, significantly above the state average.

Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, Access College Early Scholarship 2015-16 Year-End Report

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

The high school must provide information to students about dual-credit (sometimes referred to as dual-enrollment) classes offered through the high school.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

An evaluation of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Early College High School Initiative shows that students who participated in dual-enrollment courses were significantly more likely to enroll in college and earn a degree than comparison students.

Source: American Institute for Research. (2014). Early College, Continued Success; Early College High School Initiative Impact Study.

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- **Columbus High School** hosts an evening event for parents and students to learn about registering for classes. The counselor uses this time to provide information about dual-credit opportunities.
- **Harvard High School** provides dual-credit opportunities for students in upper-level math, chemistry, and psychology through partnerships with local, state and community colleges.
- Through a concerted effort, 95 percent of juniors and seniors at **Bancroft-Rosalie Community School** are enrolled in dual-credit courses. Enrollment in dual-credit courses is part of a personalized learning plan that is aligned with each student's career interest.
- **Kenesaw Public Schools** pays for textbooks for students who enroll in dual-credit courses. The books are lent out to students each semester and are now part of a dual-credit library. These book purchases have enabled an increase in dual-credit enrollment.
- **Millard South High School** invites their eighth grade students and parents to dual-credit informational events. This helps families get a head start on planning high school coursework for their students.
- **Scottsbluff High School** has seen an exponential increase in their dual-credit enrollment that they credit to the creation of career academies and an ongoing partnership with the local community college. Students are required to attend a meeting at the beginning of the school year to discuss registration, payment, and the course monitoring process.

SCHOLARSHIP SEARCHES

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

Students must conduct a scholarship search during both their junior and senior years of high school.

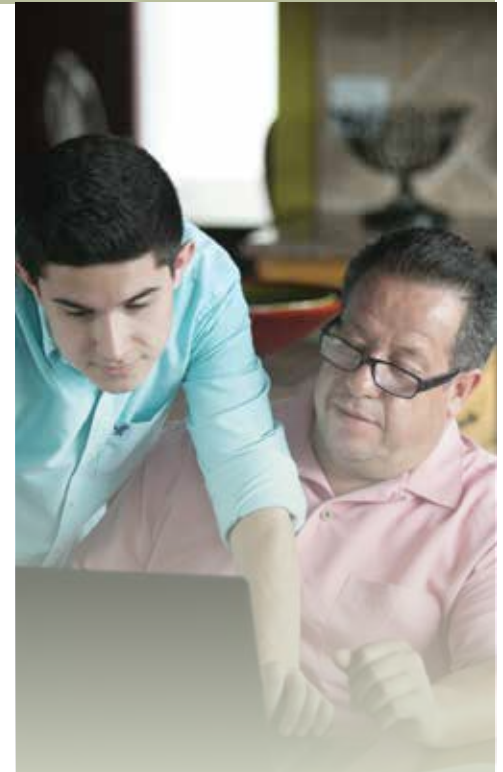
WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Research shows that grants and scholarships help students persist in their education and graduate from college. Financial assistance enables and encourages students to focus on their coursework, rather than attending school part-time and working part-time jobs to finance their education.

Source: Making College Possible for Low-Income students; Public Policy Institute of California (October 2014)

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- **Omaha North High Magnet School** purchases scholarship chords to honor each student who earns a scholarship and presents the chords at the school's scholarship night. The chords, which students wear at graduation, build a culture of celebrating hard work and persistence.
- At **North Bend High School**, students attend a scholarship-writing night. The school provides food and essay-writing help from English teachers.
- Students at **Wood River Public Schools** conduct scholarship searches as part of a comprehensive classroom curriculum. Students use this class time to complete various steps of the college-going process.
- **Lincoln Northeast High School** emphasizes the importance of searching for scholarship dollars early at their *KnowHow2GO* assembly for ninth grade students.
- **Fairbury High School** has more seniors completing scholarships than ever before and more juniors starting their searches early due to encouragement from counselors.



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COLLEGE APPLICATIONS



*Nebraska's third annual Apply2College campaign, held in the fall of 2017, drew **204** high schools.*

*At the 153 schools that reported results, **7,324** seniors submitted **11,708** applications to **170** colleges.*

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

Students must complete at least one college application during the fall of their senior year.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Students tend to submit too few college applications and do not apply to enough "reach" and "match" colleges. Barriers may be procedural, geographical, cultural, informational, or financial. Potential solutions include programs that alter the usual application processes, outreach by colleges, promoting application fee waivers, and improving college counseling.

Source: A Review of the Role of College Application on Student's Postsecondary Outcomes (October 2014). The College Board.

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- The counselor at **Weeping Water High School** ensures that every student applies to at least one college. Students are also required to complete a 'Future Plan Paper' before graduation that encourages them to reflect on their high school experience, detail their post-graduation educational goals, and outline a plan of action to reach their goals.
- **Omaha South High School** held an *Apply2College* week with unique giveaways. Students who applied to college and staff celebrated at the end of the week with food and games.
- **Lincoln Southeast High School** utilized the counseling department's social media account to live stream the school's *Apply2College* event. The live stream was used to increase awareness to students and the community.
- **Diller-Odell High School** designates school time to help students request transcripts for college classes they have taken throughout their high school career.
- **Lincoln High School** gives t-shirts to students who participate in the *Apply2College* event. The shirts promote the importance of completing college applications and going to college.
- **Milford High School's** *Apply2College* event is a full day of activities ranging from applying to college, hearing from guest speakers, and learning social skills for a professional setting.

FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

Students must attend a Financial Aid Presentation, preferably with a family member or guardian, before November of their senior year.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Children and their parents expect that the children will become college students. However, parents surveyed knew little about college prices and financial aid, and had done little to prepare financially. There was less awareness of the Federal Pell Grant among lower-income, Latino and less educated parents than among other groups: Forty-four percent of Latino parent respondents were aware of Pell Grants compared to 81 percent of Caucasians and 82 percent of African Americans.

Source: Cracking the Student Aid Code: Parent and Student Perspectives on Paying for College (November 2010).

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- The counselor at **Wheeler Central Public Schools** placed newspaper and radio ads to promote the daytime Financial Aid Program to parents in neighboring towns. A catered lunch helped ease the burden on parents who were arriving directly from work or taking their lunch time to attend.
- **Garden County High School** reviews local scholarships and answers questions about the FAFSA during their Financial Aid Program for senior parents.
- **Hampton High School** holds their Financial Aid Program during fall parent-teacher conferences and targets parents of both juniors and seniors.
- **Kearney Senior High School** utilizes their daily Advisement class to connect with students about financial aid through lessons and presentations.
- Seniors at **Thayer Central High School** create their FSA ID during their Financial Aid Program to ensure they complete the first step to receiving financial aid.



*The unmet financial need
for college students
receiving Pell grant funding
in Nebraska was **\$227.4**
million in 2014-15.*

*2016 Tuition, Fees and Financial
Aid Report, Nebraska's Coordinating
Commission for Postsecondary Education*

COMPLETING THE FAFSA



More than **14,500** FAFSAs were submitted by Nebraska high school students during the 2016/2017 cycle.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Nebraska High School Information

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

Students and parents need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or EducationQuest's *College Funding Estimator*, sometime between October and before March 1 of the senior year.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The main reasons students do not complete a FAFSA is lack of information, complexity of the form, and a non-categorical "other." The federal government has taken steps to simplify the FAFSA, but studies show the most effective means of increasing FAFSA completion is through one-on-one personal assistance.

Source: Davidson, J. Cody "Increasing FAFSA Completion Rates: Research, Policies and Practices" (2013) *Journal of Student Financial Aid*

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- **David City High School** uses the FAFSA Completion Initiative to make sure each college-going student completes the FAFSA by the end of fall semester.
- **Benson High School** helps students create their FSA ID during the school's *Apply2College* event to get the process started early.
- The counselor at **Logan View High School** sends weekly reminders to students about the completion status of their FAFSA.
- Recognizing the importance of completing the FAFSA, the counseling team at **Omaha Bryan High School** offer their students incentives for filing early in the fall semester. The team also holds FAFSA filing days to help parents and families. This ensures students are on track to receive financial aid awards in a timely manner.
- The counselor at **Crawford High School** gives families an opportunity to complete the FAFSA at school with guidance from an EducationQuest staff member.

COLLEGE FAIRS OR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING PROGRAMS

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

Students must attend an EducationQuest College Fair or a Nebraska Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (NACRAO)-sanctioned Educational Planning Program by October of the students' senior year.

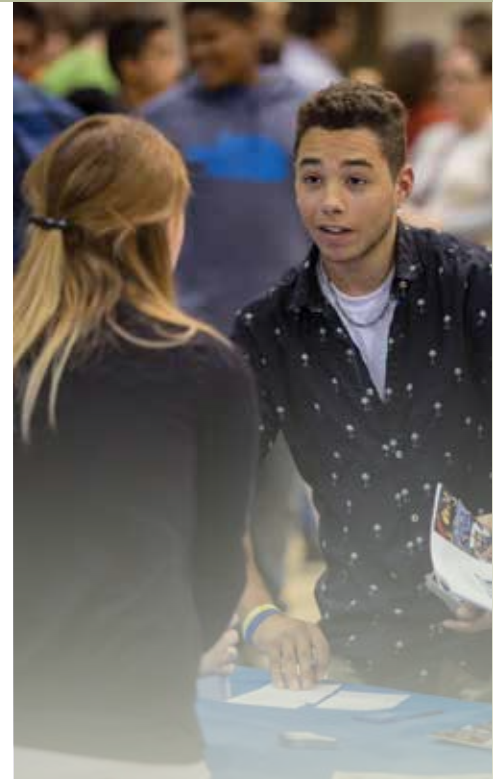
WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Forty-three percent of high schools seniors surveyed said the college fair changed their mind about colleges that were not already in their top choices. College fairs provide an opportunity for colleges to expose their schools to students and for students to explore and engage.

Source: Has the Impact of College Fairs Changed? New Cappex study explores student views. (July 2013). Retrieved from Cappex.com.

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- The counselor at **Garden County High School** encourages students to attend Educational Planning Programs early in their sophomore year and requires that they collect information from at least five college representatives.
- The counselor at **Central City High School** hosts a successful combined college and career fair with 50+ speakers from the community and surrounding area.
- All seniors at **East Butler High School** attended a college fair. With such great attendance from seniors, the school plans to implement similar activities for 9th grade students.
- **Southern Jr-Sr High School** gives juniors and seniors a bingo card with questions to ask at a college fair. The cards encourage engagement with the college reps.
- **Plattsmouth High School** combined their college fair with a panel of alumni currently attending college. The local paper wrote a story on the successful event and an Omaha television station interviewed students at the fair. The event was attended by three other schools and made the 6 o'clock news!



In a 2017 survey administered by EducationQuest to Nebraska high school students, respondents ranked college fairs as the second most important way to explore potential colleges.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



The Nebraska Department of Education identified family engagement as an essential area of focus in its new Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT).

Nebraska Department of Education, Family and Community Engagement website [www.education.ne.gov/family]

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

High schools must provide a meeting for families of 9th and 10th grade students that includes information about careers, importance of academics, and financial aid.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Minority, low-income and first-generation families tend to be less familiar with how to access and prepare for higher education. They are also sometimes unaware of how to foster critical developmental processes – such as identity development, motivation and goal setting – that will help their adolescents succeed in college.

Source: Helping Families Pave the Path to College: Supporting the Development Process that Facilitates College Readiness. Savitz-Romer, Mandy & Bouffard, Suzanee, Harvard Education Press

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- **Yutan High School** invites all families to participate in the school's career day with their students. Attendees hear multiple speakers and learn about college and career paths from individuals in the community and surrounding areas.
- **Norfolk Senior High** connects with Spanish-speaking parents by translating important forms and presentations. The staff also includes announcements for college-access events in Spanish-speaking church services.
- **West Point-Beemer High School** hosts a family night for their Spanish-speaking families. The evening includes dinner, information on college preparation and scholarships, and a panel of high school and college students who share their experiences.
- The counselor at **Blue Hill High School** has brought more information to families online by using social media and creating a user-friendly website to post updates from the counseling department including important deadlines.
- The counselor at **Raymond Central High School** creates a timeline of all college access events, including campus visits and important deadlines, as a resource for parents.
- **Beatrice High School** took college access programming to families during a community Halloween event. The college access team dressed up in graduation caps and gowns to distribute candy and college-access information.
- **Deshler Public Schools** holds an open house at the beginning of each school year to help families get to know school staff and know what resources are available, including the counseling department and college planning.

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT REQUIREMENT

The high school will develop local/regional business partnerships that will result in a 10% cash or in-kind match.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Partnerships between education and business consistently show value in communities across the nation. They can, for example:

- Provide work-based learning experiences and strengthen career awareness
- Help schools build college and career cultures that empower students
- Help educators align curriculum and readiness standards with business needs
- Provide funding and equipment to modernize classrooms, workspaces, and labs
- Help youth build relationships with strong role models and mentors
- Provide financial guidance and advice that lessens affordability as a barrier to college

Source: College Summit, Business Engagement in Education: Key Partners for Improving Access

UNIQUE APPROACHES FROM NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

- **Sandy Creek Public Schools** and **Lawrence-Nelson Public Schools** are partnering with community members to match students with career mentors. Students work with their mentors to complete a project in their career field of interest that is later presented to school faculty and the community.
- **Pawnee City Public School** partnered with the Pawnee City Rural Health Clinic to provide basic job training and job shadowing to students interested in the medical field.
- **Cedar Bluffs High** encourages Future Business Leaders of America members to plan and implement the school's career fair. With guidance, students forged partnerships with community professionals to produce the school event.
- **Cozad High School** partners with the Cozad Development Corporation to conduct mock interviews, hold the spring senior seminars, and create work-study opportunities for seniors.
- **Johnson County Central High School** receives cash donations from multiple businesses in the surrounding community. These donations go toward scholarships that help fill the financial gap for students attending college.
- With the help of local businesses, **Malcom Jr-Sr High School** exposes students to career fields, including the military, manufacturing, and publishing. Students tour facilities and get lunch and prizes from community partners.



COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT RECIPIENTS

2016

Beatrice High School	Sandy Creek Public Schools	Plattsmouth High School
Cedar Bluffs High School	Lawrence-Nelson Jr-Sr High School	Ralston High School
Cozad Senior High School	Lincoln Northeast High School	Scottsbluff High School
Crawford High School	Malcolm Jr-Sr High School	Southern Jr-Sr High School
Deshler High School	Milford High School	Thayer Central High School
East Butler High School	Millard South High School	Wheeler Central High School
Fairbury Jr-Sr High School	Omaha Bryan High School	Wisner-Pilger Jr-Sr High School
Hampton High School	Omaha Northwest High Magnet School	Wood River Public School
Johnson County Central High School	Pawnee City Public School	Yutan High School
Kearney Senior High School		

2014

Bancroft-Rosalie Community School	Harvard High School	Omaha South Magnet High School
Blue Hill High School	Kenesaw High School	Raymond Central High School
Central City High School	Lincoln High School	Santee High School
Columbus High School	Lincoln Southeast High School	Weeping Water High School
Crete High School	Norfolk Senior High School	West Point-Beemer High School
David City High School	North Bend Central High School	
Diller-Odell Secondary School	Omaha Benson High School	
Garden County High School	Omaha North Magnet High School	

2012

Alliance High School	Hastings Senior High School	Platteview High School
Aurora High School	Lincoln North Star High School	Scribner-Snyder Secondary School
Chadron High School	McCook High School	Shickley High School
Falls City High School	Nebraska City High School	South Sioux City High School
Fremont High School	Oakland-Craig High School	Winside High School
Gordon-Rushville High School	Palmer Junior-Senior High School	York High School
Grand Island Senior High School		



COLLEGE ACCESS GRANT RECIPIENTS

2010

Beatrice High School	Pawnee City School	Tekamah-Herman High School
Crawford Public Schools	Plattsmouth High School	Wisner-Pilger High School
Milford High School	Ralston High School	Wood River High School
Omaha Bryan High School	Sandy Creek High School	
Omaha Northwest High Magnet School	Scottsbluff High School	
	Southern Public Schools	

2008

Bancroft-Rosalie Community School	Garden County High School	Omaha South Magnet High School
Cedar Bluffs High School	Lincoln High School	Santee Community School
Central City High School	Lincoln Northeast High School	West Point-Beemer High School
Columbus High School	Omaha Benson High School	
Crete High School	Omaha North Magnet High School	

2006

Alliance High School	Grand Island Senior High School	McCook High School
Aurora High School	Hastings Senior High School	Meridian High School
Broken Bow High School	Lincoln North Star High School	Millard South High School
Falls City High School	Madison High School	Umo ^o ho ⁿ Nation High School
Gordon-Rushville High School		



About EducationQuest Foundation

EducationQuest Foundation is a nonprofit organization with a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska. Headquartered in Lincoln, EducationQuest provides 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.

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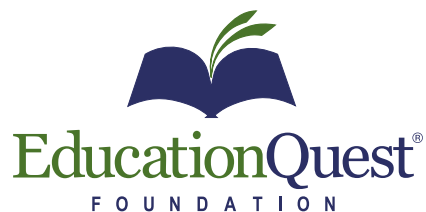
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