

NEBRASKA'S



**COORDINATING COMMISSION
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

2020 BIENNIAL REPORT

Covering Calendar Years 2019 and 2020

APPROVED BY THE COORDINATING COMMISSION

December 3, 2020

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This report and others are available at the Coordinating Commission's website:
ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports

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NEBRASKA'S
COORDINATING COMMISSION
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

2020 Biennial Report

Provided pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1412 (9)

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]. The Coordinating Commission is an independent agency with a governing board

of Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature. There are nine employees on the Commission's staff, making it one of the smallest agencies of its kind in the country.

The 2020 Biennial Report provides an overview of the Coordinating Commission's accomplishments during 2019 and 2020.

THE COORDINATING COMMISSION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Creating and putting into action a comprehensive statewide plan to guide Nebraska's higher education system
- Partnering with Legislators to develop innovative and results-driven higher education policy
- Helping low-income Nebraska students attend college by awarding over \$22 million in need-based financial aid programs and developing state financial aid strategy
- Administering the Community College Gap Assistance Program, which offers financial aid to students who want to work in high-need fields
- Ensuring the efficient use of taxpayer funds by approving or disapproving postsecondary construction projects that rely on tax funds and reviewing institutional biennial budget requests
- Approving or disapproving academic programs based on specific criteria: need, demand, unnecessary duplication, resources, and cost
- Assembling and analyzing statewide data and publishing reports tied to the state's higher education goals. The Coordinating Commission is the only Nebraska entity that does this kind of work on a statewide level
- Administering roughly \$103 million in annual State appropriations to Nebraska's six community colleges
- Authorizing the operation of out-of-state and new Nebraska postsecondary institutions
- Saving Nebraska colleges and universities thousands of dollars through administration of a nationwide distance learning agreement.

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

The Nebraska Constitution gives the Coordinating Commission the authority to adopt, and revise as needed, a comprehensive plan for postsecondary education. The Constitution states that this plan must include: (a) definitions of the role and mission of each public postsecondary educational institution within any general assignments of role and mission as prescribed by the Legislature and (b) plans for facilities which utilize tax funds designated by the Legislature.

The Commission's authority to adopt and revise a comprehensive plan is further elaborated in statute, which states that the purposes of the Commission shall be to: (1) develop an ongoing comprehensive statewide plan for the operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of postsecondary education, (2) identify and enact policies to meet the educational, research, and public service needs of the state, and (3) effect the best use of available resources through the elimination of unnecessary duplication of

programs and facilities among Nebraska's public institutions. The same statute dictates that the Commission approach postsecondary education from a statewide perspective. The Legislature also established in statute that the comprehensive plan must include an assessment of the postsecondary educational needs of the state and include a number of policy guidelines.

The current comprehensive plan is the Commission's second. It was adopted in 2000 after the Legislature passed LB 816 in 1999, which called for a review and revision of the Commission's first comprehensive plan approved in June 1992. Throughout 2015 and 2016, the Commission went through the process of updating Chapter One of the plan.

Chapter One includes a vision statement for postsecondary education in Nebraska; an examination of the state's evolving demographic, economic, political, and educational forces and their potential impacts; a series of statewide goals; and, new to the plan, a number of national and institutional comparisons for the state's

public institutions and for state higher education as a whole. The comparisons aim for Nebraska to be among the 10 best states in national rankings – including educational attainment among adults -- and for individual campuses to rank among the five best institutions in peer comparisons. Currently, Nebraska ranks

9th in the percentage of adults aged 25-34 years old with an associate's degree or higher and 13th in the percentage of adults ages 25-64 with an associate's degree or higher.

The full plan is available on the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

VISION FOR NEBRASKA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Nebraskans will reap many benefits from affordable, accessible, and high-quality postsecondary education. Nebraska's people will value and support postsecondary institutions that are vital, vigorous, and visionary. Each postsecondary institution will fulfill its role and mission with distinction by being responsive to changing academic, workforce, societal, economic, cultural, and community development needs. Together, Nebraska's postsecondary institutions will provide access to educational opportunities that meet the diverse needs of students and citizens; create environments that foster student success; position Nebraska to excel in the global economy; and exercise careful, creative, and cooperative stewardship of available resources.

*- Chapter One, Comprehensive Statewide
Plan for Postsecondary Education*

What does the Commission do?

Administers student financial aid programs

Financial Aid

The Commission administers the Nebraska Opportunity Grant (NOG), the Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program, and the Community College Gap Assistance 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 2018-19, \$11.4 million of the grant's funding came from State lottery funds and \$6.6 million from the State's general funds. In 2019-20, lottery funding increased to \$12.4 million, while the general funds appropriation stayed the same at \$6.6 million.

Nebraska Opportunity Grant Biennium History:

2018-19

Total awarded: \$17,978,264

- 12,753 students received a grant (37% of eligible students)
 - Public institutions: 9,463 students
 - \$1,470 average award
 - Private, non-profit: 2,985 students
 - \$1,179 average award
 - Proprietary/for-profit: 305 students
 - \$1,785 average award

Average grant awarded: \$1,410

2019-20:

Total awarded: \$18,740,356

- 12,956 students received a grant (42% of eligible students)
 - Public institutions: 10,036 students
 - \$1,470 average award
 - Private, non-profit: 2,674 students
 - \$1,339 average award
 - Proprietary/for-profit: 246 students
 - \$1,643 average award

Average grant awarded: \$1,446

Access College Early Scholarship Program

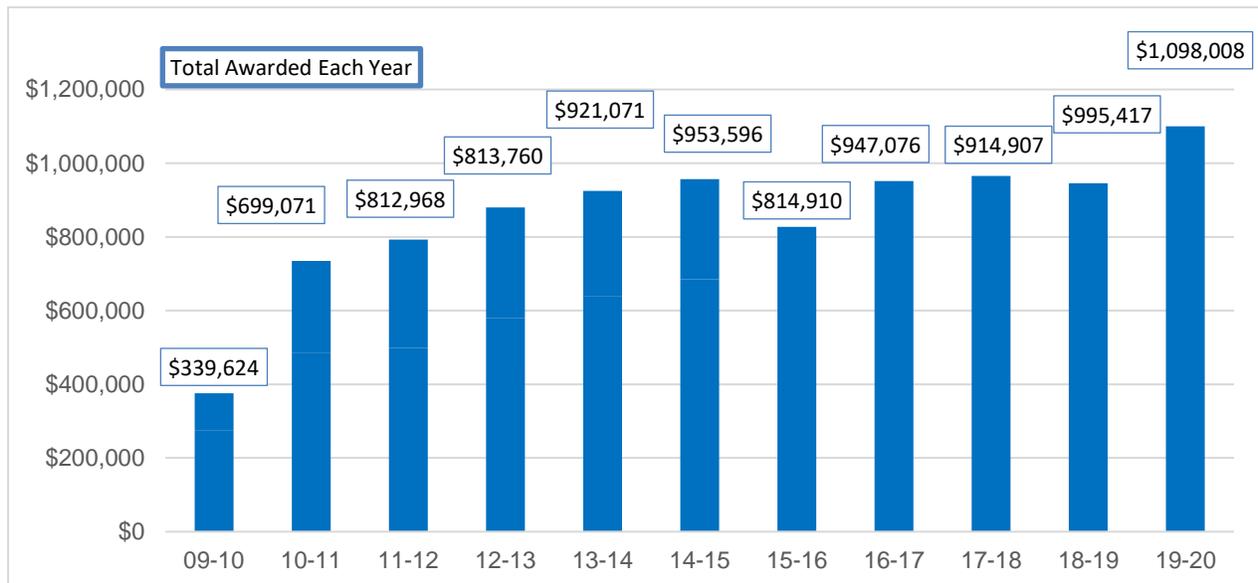
The Access College Early Scholarship Program awards scholarships to high school students from low-income families who enroll in a college course at a participating public or private postsecondary institution while the student is still in high school. The Commission recommended the creation of this program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

Current national 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.

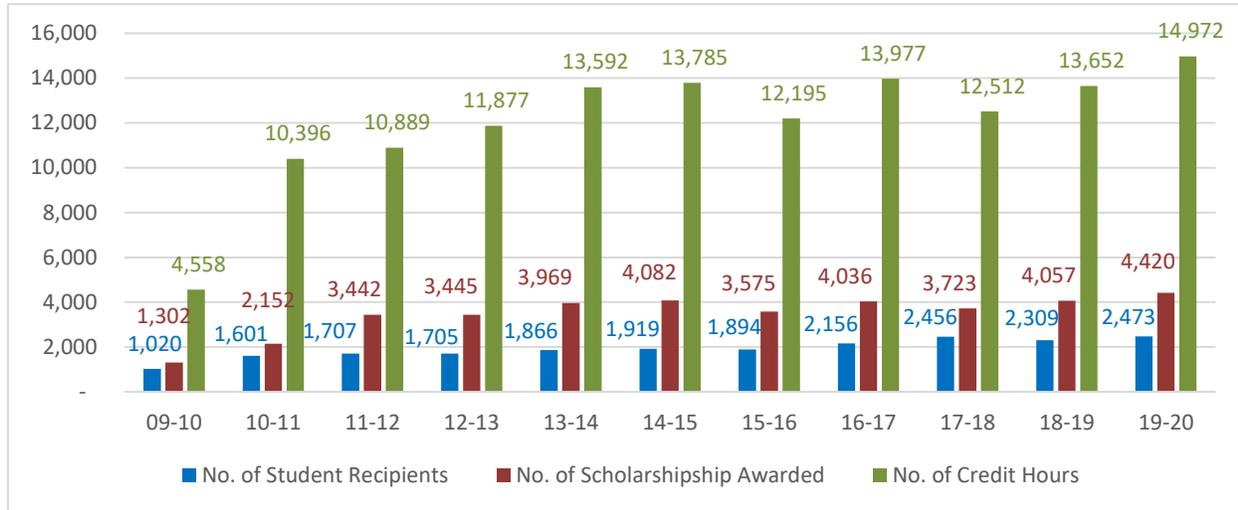
The Commission believes family income should not exclude a student from taking college courses while in high school.

**ACE Scholarship Program Funding and Awards
2009-10 through 2019-20**

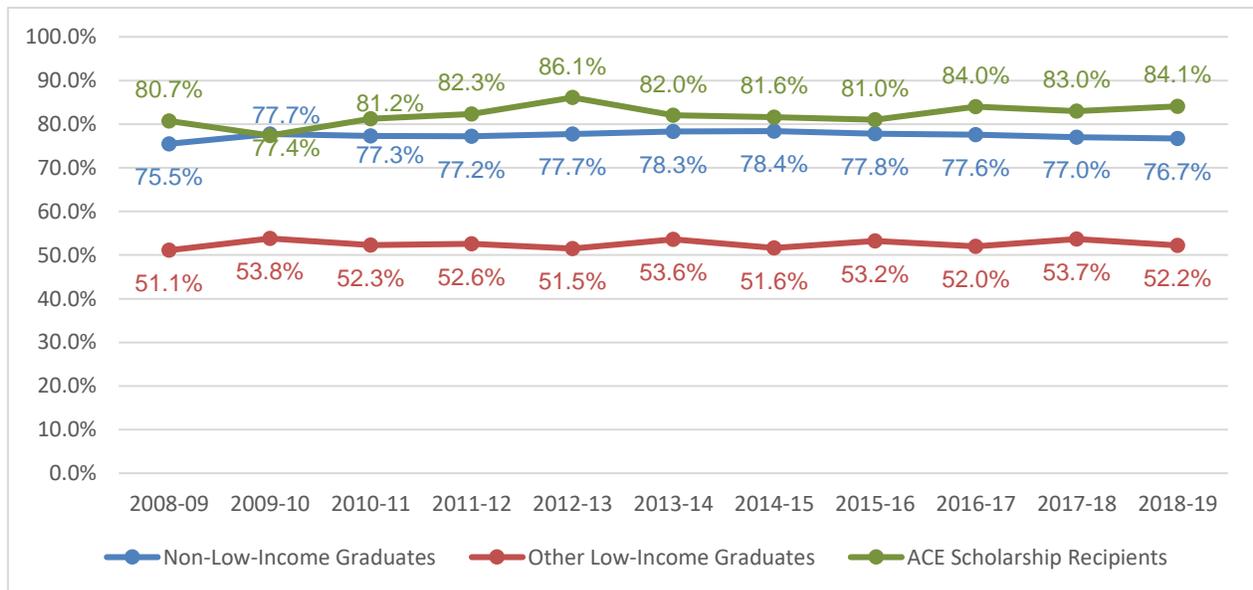


(ACE charts continued on next page)

Growth of ACE Scholarship Program Awards, Recipients and Credit Hours 2009-10 through 2019-20



Nebraska Public High School College Continuation Rates 2008-09 through 2018-19

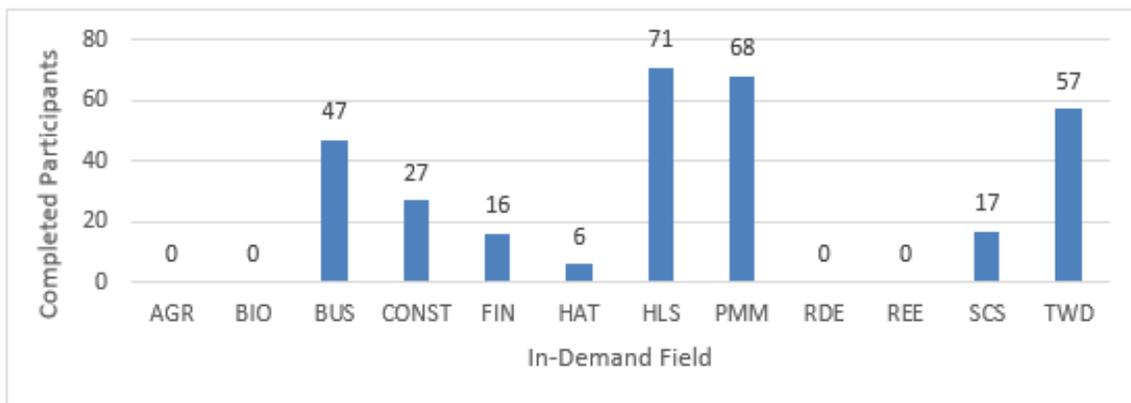


Community College Gap Assistance Program

In 2015 the Legislature gave authority to the Coordinating Commission to administer the Community College Gap Assistance Program, which had a formal start date of July 1, 2016. Through lottery funds, the Gap program receives roughly \$1.4 million annually. These funds are distributed to the state’s six community colleges, which recruit and select eligible low-income students enrolled in short-term non-credit

and for-credit vocational programs to receive grants. Student grants can be used for tuition, direct training costs, required books and equipment, and fees, including those for industry testing services and background check services. Legislation requires that eligible programs be for “in-demand” occupations, such as health services; transportation, warehousing, and distribution logistics; agriculture and food processing; precision metals manufacturing; software and computer sciences; education; and hospitality and tourism.

**Gap Assistance Program Completed Participants
In-Demand Programs of Study Completed - 2018-19 and 2019-20**



AGR	Agriculture and food processing	HLS	Health services
BIO	Biosciences	PMM	Precision metals manufacturing
BUS	Business management and administrative services	RDE	Research, development, and engineering services
CONST	Construction	REE	Renewable energy
FIN	Financial services	SCS	Software and computer services
HAT	Hospitality and tourism	TWD	Transportation, warehousing, and distribution logistics

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 at ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

Budget and Financial Analyses

Postsecondary Education Operating Budget Recommendations for 2021-2023 *(October 2020)*

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 16 of this document for more information.)*

Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization for 2021-2023 *(October 2020)*

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 15 of this document for more information.)*

Tuition, Fees, and College Affordability Report

(September 2020)

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:

- As a result of relatively strong state and local tax support, tuition and fees at Nebraska's postsecondary institutions remain moderate compared to institutions in most states;
- Nevertheless, 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 2017-18, Nebraska ranked 35th from the top among states in need-based student aid grant dollars per undergraduate full-time equivalent student at \$210. The national average was \$667 per FTE student.

Source: 2020 Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid Report

Academic Analyses

Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls *(2019, 2020)*

Historically, this report has described the types of distance education courses available to Nebraska residents, which public institutions offer distance education, how distance education is delivered, and how many students are taking advantage of distance education. Due to the current ubiquity of distance education opportunities, since 2018 the Commission has collected and reported only data related to dual enrollment college courses offered to Nebraska high school students.

Dashboards

College Continuation Rates *(Last revised July 2020)*

This dashboard provides our estimate of college-going rates for each of Nebraska's public high schools that awarded regular high school diplomas from 2007-2008 through 2018-19. Data users also can download an Excel file of the entire dataset, including our estimate of college-going rates, by county, for the high school graduating class of 2005-06 (includes public and private schools).

Degrees and Other Awards *(Last revised June 2020)*

These dashboards summarize the number of degrees and awards conferred by Nebraska's public colleges and universities, independent colleges and universities, and for-profit/career schools, as reported in the federal IPEDS surveys. The information corresponds to the data presented in the

Commission's *2020 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Degrees and Other Awards Conferred 2008-2009 through 2018-2019*.

Enrollment (*Last revised September 2020*)

These dashboards summarize enrollments at Nebraska's public colleges and universities, independent colleges and universities, and for-profit/career schools, as reported in the federal IPEDS surveys. The information corresponds to the data presented in the Commission's *2020 Factual Look at Higher Education in Nebraska: Enrollment (Fall enrollment: 2009 through 2019; 12-month enrollment: 2009-10 through 2018-19)*.

KEY FINDING: The Attainment Gap

A consequence of the disparities in high school graduation rates, college continuation rates, and college graduation rates is that Nebraska's gap in educational attainment between whites and minorities (i.e., not white non-Hispanic) is the third largest in the nation. In Nebraska, 55.6% of 25- to 44-year old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate's degree or higher. In comparison, only 29.9% of 25- to 44-year-old minorities have completed an associate's degree or higher. The net difference is an attainment gap of 25.7 percentage points. Nationally, 51.2% of 25- to 44-year-old, white non-Hispanics have completed an associate's degree or higher. In comparison, only 35.1% of 25- to 44-year-old minorities have completed an associate's degree or higher.

- *2020 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report*, pg. S19

Other Analyses, Publications

Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report (*March 2019, 2020*)

This statutorily required annual report provides data to the Nebraska Legislature to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving three key priorities for Nebraska's postsecondary education system developed by the 2003 LR 174 Higher Education Task Force and incorporated in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 85-1428 (3). They 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.

Factual Look at Higher Education in

Nebraska (*2019, 2020*) This annual analysis uses data from the federal IPEDS surveys to provide comparative data for Nebraska's higher education institutions. The report is released in two sections: Enrollment and Degrees and Other Awards.

Measuring Accomplishments (*2019, 2020*)

This annual report is a companion piece to the *Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education*. Data from a variety of sources is used to measure Nebraska's progress toward achieving the major statewide goals outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan* through national comparisons and institutional peer comparisons.

What does the Commission do?

Authorizes academic programs

Academic Programs

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 consistency with the *Comprehensive Plan* and to prevent unnecessary duplication.

During the 2019-2020 biennium, the Commission reviewed 296 existing programs. Of those, 283 were approved to continue and 13 were returned to the institution for further review. The institutions also reported that they had discontinued 42 programs—actions that do not require Commission approval.

The Commission also reviewed 17 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 24 proposals for new academic programs and organizational units at public institutions. One proposal was withdrawn. Another 59

proposed programs were reviewed and determined to be reasonable and moderate extensions of existing programs, thus requiring no action by the Commission.

Consumer Protection

Closed Institutions When four-year institutions close, state statutes require their records to be transferred to the registrar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Commission facilitates record transfer and assists students in obtaining transcripts, often for several years after closure. Two campuses closed in the 2019-20 biennium: Purdue University Global Omaha campus and National American University Bellevue campus. The Commission staff assisted students from these two institutions as well as students from Wright Career College, ITT Technical Institute, and Grace University, which closed prior to the 2019-20 biennium.

Student Complaints State statutes provide an avenue for students to file a complaint against an institution if it has violated the Postsecondary Institution Act. Few student complaints rise to this level. Nevertheless, Commission staff assist students by answering questions and often walking them through the

complaint process at their institution, explaining financial aid issues, or putting them in touch with the appropriate person at their institution. Documented complaints conservatively average roughly 30 per year. Many others are answered by a phone call and are not formally recorded.

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

New or out-of-state institutions authorized in the 2019-2020 biennium:

North Park Theological Seminary (Chicago, Illinois)

In April 2020 North Park Theological Seminary was authorized to operate in Nebraska, teaching two weeks each year at Carol Joy Holling Camp near Ashland. The instruction is part of the Master of Arts in Christian Formation and Master of Arts in Christian Ministry programs.

CHI Health School of Radiologic Technology (Omaha, Nebraska)

The predecessors of CHI Health School of Radiologic Technology have offered training in radiologic technology since the mid-1950s. In July 2019 the school offered an AAS degree in radiologic technology. At its July 2019 meeting, the Commission approved CHI Health to offer a Bachelor of Science degree in Radiologic Sciences (BSRS).

What does the Commission do?

Approves proposals for facilities

Capital Construction and Facilities

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

The first responsibility is to review, monitor, and approve or disapprove capital construction project requests that use more than \$2 million in tax funds to construct, renovate, or acquire facilities, or more than \$95,000 per year in additional tax funds to operate and maintain. Disapproved projects cannot receive state funds for construction or ongoing operating and maintenance costs. From January 2019 through December 2020, the Commission reviewed and approved 6 capital construction project proposals submitted by the institutions.

The second 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. With its statewide perspective, the Commission provides a unified prioritization of all approved individual capital construction budget requests for higher education. 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 individual capital construction budget requests eligible for state funding. Only those requests that were approved by the governing boards and the Commission, or the Task Force on Building Renewal, and are requesting state funding in the biennial budget request are considered. The Commission identified ongoing routine maintenance and addressing deferred repair as two essential areas in need of new State and institutional funding for the 2021-2023 biennium. The Commission prioritized 13 individual capital construction budget requests for the coming biennium, with the highest priorities being:

1. LB 309 Fire & Life Safety – Class I Requests,
2. LB 309 Deferred Repair – Class I Requests,
3. (tie) University-wide Facilities Renewal Program, and
3. (tie) LB 309 Energy Conservation – Class I Requests.

The latest full report, *Capital Construction Budget Recommendations and Prioritization 2021-2023 Biennium*, is available at the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

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, if necessary to conform to the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education, 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 assure consistency with the *Comprehensive Plan* and promote 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 2020, the Commission reviewed 15 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 15 requests, one was a new and expanded request for which the Commission recommended new general funds

In addition, there were 14 requests that were part of the continuation budget recommendation. The total dollars for institutional continuation costs and new and expanded requests was \$45,090,733 for the biennium.

The full report, *2021-2023 Institutional Operating Budget Recommendations*, is available on the Commission's website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

Initiatives, Programs, and Updates

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is an agreement among member states, districts, and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offerings of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a national council and administered by four regional education compacts. Nebraska was accepted as part of SARA in 2014. The Coordinating Commission is the state's portal agency for the initiative, meaning Nebraska institutions apply to the Commission to participate. As of December 2020, 25 Nebraska colleges and universities had joined SARA. All have renewed their participation annually and continue to be active members.

Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit

The Coordinating Commission is leading Nebraska's work as part of a 13-state initiative to help military service members, veterans, and their families overcome

barriers to earning postsecondary credentials and entering the workforce. The Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC) aims to, among other things, identify effective policies and best practices that can be shared among participating states. Volunteers from state agencies, university systems, college campuses, and other organizations have been working together as part of the initiative. The Coordinating Commission has served as the MCMC facilitator in Nebraska, with a staff member serving on the MCMC steering committee. A recent focus has been to identify ways that Nebraska institutions might award credit to veterans for education or training received while in the military.

FAFSA Completion Initiative

In 2015, the Coordinating Commission began leading an effort in Nebraska to encourage more high school students to apply for federal financial aid to attend college. As part of the U.S. Department of Education's FAFSA Completion Initiative, the Commission can provide certain designated entities – typically high schools – with limited data about their students'

progress in completing and filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA Initiative enables the designated entities to better target counseling, help with completing the FAFSA, and provide other resources to those students. Identifying such students can promote college access and success by ensuring students, particularly low-income students, have access to financial aid. The Commission received funding from the Legislature in 2015 for the implementation of the initiative's software.

Dual Credit

In 2019, the Coordinating Commission and the State Board of Education undertook a joint dual credit initiative to study ways to increase dual credit course-taking in Nebraska. The initiative was assisted by consultants from the Education Commission of the States and resulted in a report with recommendations directed at increased access, better communications with students and parents, credit transfer, increasing the number of qualified instructors, affordability, and improved data and reporting. The Coordinating Commission has implemented data collection improvements and requested additional funding for the Access College Early Scholarship program. During the 2020 legislative session, the Coordinating Commission worked with the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee to target new lottery funds to dual credit priority areas in LB 920. That work will continue in 2021.

New to the Commission

Governor Ricketts appointed two new Commissioners during the 2019-2020 biennium. Tim Daniels and Charles Garman, both of Omaha, were appointed in September 2019.

As of November 2020, there were two Commissioner vacancies (Districts 4 and 6).