NEBRASKA · STATE AID REFERENCE

Nebraska State Aid Cheat Sheet (2027–28)

A two-page reference for counselors and families. Free to copy, print, and share.

Nebraska has no state scholarship portal and no state application. Every dollar runs through two front doors: the **FAFSA** and **each college's own scholarship process**. The state need grant is first come, first served at each college; the Career Scholarship follows the major and has different academic rules on each kind of campus; and the free-tuition promises belong to the public college systems. Recent changes: the state grant now runs on the SAI (Student Aid Index), the Career Scholarship Act was amended in 2025 (LB306), and the 2027–28 FAFSA opened in late September 2026. Verified against CCPE, Nebraska statutes, the University of Nebraska, and the State College System, October 2026.

The Programs at a Glance

Program	What it pays and who qualifies
Nebraska Opportunity Grant (state, need-based)	Set by each college; averaged $1,823 in 2024–25 ($961 at community colleges, $2,320 at University of Nebraska). SAI at or below 110% of the Pell cutoff, Nebraska resident, no bachelor's degree. FAFSA only; some colleges add a form. Only 42.9% of eligible students received it.
Nebraska Career Scholarship (state, major-based)	Legal caps: University of Nebraska $10,000 (20 to 27 ACT) or $25,000 (28+ ACT), transfers $10,000 with no test; state colleges $15,000 and private colleges $10,000 with an **18 ACT or a 3.0 GPA**; community colleges $15,000. Eligible high-demand majors only. Pays tuition, fees, tools, and **room and board**. Renewable four years. UNL publishes $8,000 a year minimum.
Nebraska Promise (University of Nebraska)	Full tuition, up to 15 credits a semester, after Pell, state grants, and university scholarships (last-dollar). Family AGI $65,000 or less, or any Pell recipient. Resident, full time, 2.5 GPA. UNL, UNO, UNK, UNMC, NCTA.
State College Tuition Guarantee (Chadron, Peru, Wayne)	Full tuition after Pell for Pell-eligible first-time freshmen and incoming transfers; Wayne State also covers AGI $70,000 or less. 12 credits a semester including one on-campus class. Outside private scholarships not counted against it.
Access College Early (dual credit)	Tuition and mandatory fees for high school students taking college courses for a grade. Family on free or reduced-price lunch, SNAP, SSI, TANF, or WIC, a hardship, or a designated career program. One application per college per term.
Community College Gap Assistance	Tuition, training costs, books, equipment, and exam fees for short workforce programs Pell does not cover. Family income at or below 250% of federal poverty guidelines. Apply through the community college's Gap representative.
Also worth knowing	Door to College: up to $5,000 a year for students who attended a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center. Goodrich Scholarship (UNO): tuition and general fees for students with need. Nebraska First Responder Pledge (UNL).

Deadlines to Post on Your Wall

Program	Deadline	Where it is submitted
Nebraska Opportunity Grant	No state deadline. Each college's share is spent in filing order.	FAFSA (plus any college form)
University of Nebraska scholarships	UNL and UNO: February 1. UNK: March 1 (2026 cycle). Confirm 2027.	Admission plus campus scholarship application
Nebraska Career Scholarship	Set by each campus, often the campus scholarship date	The college
State College Tuition Guarantee	FAFSA by April 1 (priority)	FAFSA plus admission
Nebraska Promise	FAFSA by May 1; documents by June 1; admitted by the deadline	FAFSA plus admission to an NU campus
Access College Early	Fall Dec 15, winter Feb 15, spring May 15, summer July 15	ACE application, verified by the high school
Federal FAFSA 2027–28	June 30, 2028. Ignore it: every Nebraska date above comes first.	studentaid.gov

A priority deadline is the date to apply by to be first in line. After it, money may remain, but nobody promises it.

The Rules That Trip Families Up

- **The Career Scholarship door depends on the campus.** University of Nebraska freshmen need a 20 ACT. Chadron, Peru, Wayne State, and private colleges take an 18 ACT or a 3.0 GPA. A strong-GPA student with no score loses it only at NU.
- **The Promise counts your other money.** Pell, the state grant, and university merit awards go on tuition first; the Promise fills only the gap. A merit award does not lower the bill of a Promise student unless it reaches past tuition.
- **Eligible is not funded.** 13,386 of 31,185 eligible students got the state grant in 2024–25; at community colleges, about one in four. Filing the FAFSA in the fall is the only lever.
- **Full time, every semester.** The Promise, the State College Guarantee, and UNL's Career Scholarship all require 12 credits each fall and spring. The state college guarantee also needs one on-campus class.
- **For a dependent student, Promise income means parents' AGI plus the student's.** A teen's job counts toward $65,000.

Nebraska Career Scholarship: Check These Things Early

1. Which door is open at this campus?

- **University of Nebraska** (UNL, UNO, UNK): first-time freshman with a **20 ACT** or higher. 28+ raises the legal cap to $25,000. No page we found says whether these lines accept a superscore; UNL's other test-based awards do not.
- **Chadron, Peru, Wayne State, and participating private colleges:** an **18 ACT or a 3.0 high school GPA**, either one.
- **Community colleges:** no statewide minimum published; each college sets criteria (Central CC: 9 credits a semester).

2. Is the intended major on that campus's list? UNL: engineering, math, sciences, data science, pre-health, nutrition, psychology, special education. State colleges: business administration, criminal justice, education, communication, rangeland management, industrial technology, computer information systems. Private colleges: CIS, education, engineering, health care, math. The major is checked on the census date (the day enrollment is locked in) every semester.

3. What keeps it at UNL? 12 UNL credits each semester, 24 a year, a 3.000 GPA (not rounded), an eligible major, and registering for a Nebraska internship or job by the end of year three. Switch majors only before sophomore year.

The State Need Grant: Same Rules, Very Different Odds (2024–25)

Where the student enrolled	Eligible students who got NOG	Average award
Independent (private nonprofit) colleges	61.8%	$1,691
State colleges	55.4%	$1,850
University of Nebraska	52.7%	$2,320
Community colleges	25.6%	$961
All sectors (incl. private career schools, 60.8%)	42.9%	$1,823

Source: CCPE NOG 2024–25 Year-End Report. The state publishes no single maximum; each college sets awards within its share.

Counselor Calendar: What to Tell Students When

When	What to tell them
Sophomore and junior year	If the family qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch or SNAP, apply for Access College Early before each term deadline. Plan ACT dates if a University of Nebraska campus is on the list: 20 opens the Career Scholarship there, 28 raises its cap.
Senior fall (now)	FSA IDs for parent and student, then the 2027–28 FAFSA right away. Finish admission applications. Ask every campus whether the intended major is Career Scholarship eligible and when its deadline is.
February 1	UNL and UNO scholarship deadline for Nebraska freshmen (confirm 2027). Official test scores on file.
March 1 to April 1	UNK's scholarship application in MyBLUE (March 1 in 2026). State College Tuition Guarantee FAFSA priority date April 1.
May 1 and June 1	Nebraska Promise: FAFSA and admission by May 1, documents by June 1. Check campus portals weekly for verification requests.
Fall of freshman year	Census date (sixth day of classes at UNL): 12 credits and an eligible major on record. Refile the FAFSA every October.

Three Mistakes That Cost Nebraska Students Money

- **Filing the FAFSA in spring because the state grant has no deadline.** No deadline means first come, first served. At community colleges, three in four eligible students got nothing in 2024–25.
- **Writing off the Career Scholarship without a test score.** At Chadron, Peru, Wayne State, and private colleges, a 3.0 GPA qualifies, and the award can pay for housing.
- **Budgeting a merit award on top of the Promise.** At NU the Promise counts university scholarships toward tuition. Compare offers on the housing and meals balance left after all gift aid.

The May 1 cliff

The federal FAFSA deadline for 2027–28 is June 30, 2028, and families plan around it. The Nebraska Promise closes **May 1**, with paperwork due June 1 and admission required by the deadline. A FAFSA filed May 2 means no free-tuition guarantee for the whole year, and spring starters are not guaranteed at all.

Free Resources: No Account, No Cost, No Data Collection

State aid programs and rules	**ccpe.nebraska.gov/financial-aid**
Nebraska Promise FAQ	**nebraska.edu/nebraska-promise/faq**
State College Tuition Guarantee	**nscs.edu/information-for/students/Guarantee**
Our Nebraska state aid guide	**collegereadyparent.org/nebraska**

Produced by CollegeReadyParent.org, an independent, parent-built resource. No paywall, no accounts, no lead forms, no student data collection. Counselors and educators: you may freely copy, print, and distribute this sheet. Questions or corrections: leo@collegereadyparent.org. Verified against CCPE, Nebraska statutes, the University of Nebraska, and the Nebraska State College System in October 2026. Campus dates are the latest each college published; confirm current details with the college's financial aid office before making financial decisions. Award caps are legal maximums, not promised amounts.