

# Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program Evaluation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*2025*



The Access College Early (ACE) Scholarship Program provides financial support to low-income Nebraska high school students for dual enrollment courses, aiming to expand college access and reduce time and cost to degree. This evaluation, conducted by NSWERS for the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE), examines participation trends, participant demographics and high school performance, and postsecondary outcomes using data from academic years 2017-18 through 2022-23.

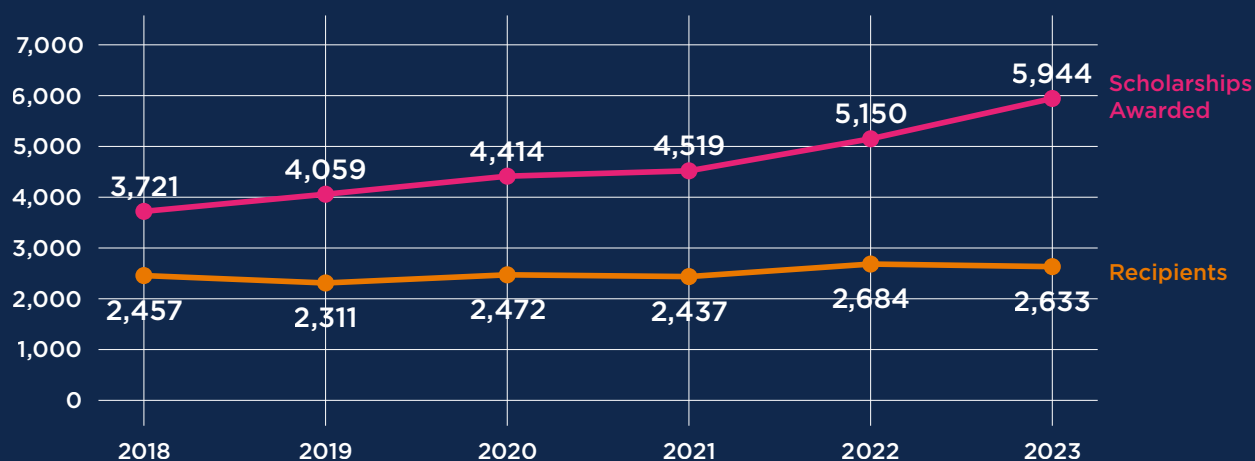
A Nebraska Statewide Workforce & Education Reporting System (NSWERS) evaluation  
prepared for the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE)

[insights.nswers.org/evaluations/ace-2025](https://insights.nswers.org/evaluations/ace-2025)

## Participation & Access

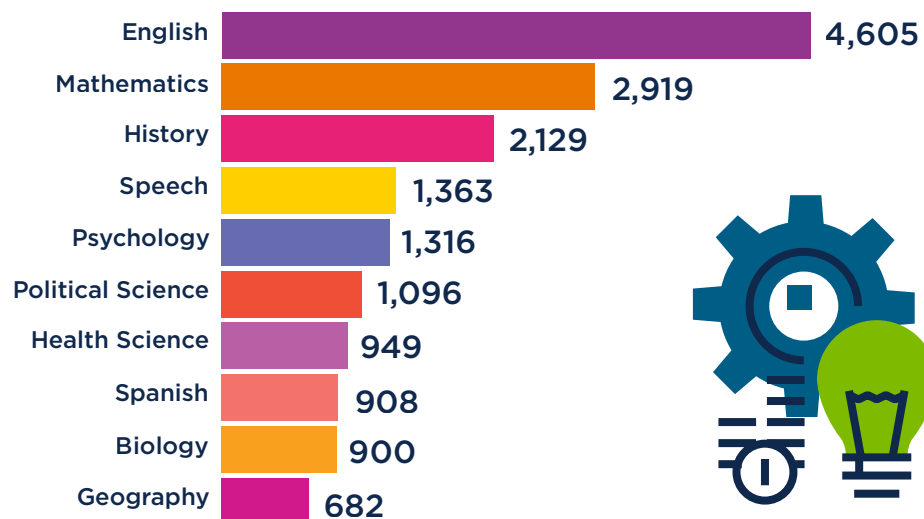
The number of ACE scholarships awarded has increased steadily, while the number of ACE scholarship recipients has remained relatively constant. This indicates that scholarships per student have increased over time, likely due to the removal of annual funding limits per recipient. Most scholarship recipients are high school juniors and seniors.

**ACE RECIPIENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED  
(ACADEMIC YEARS 2017-18 TO 2022-23)**



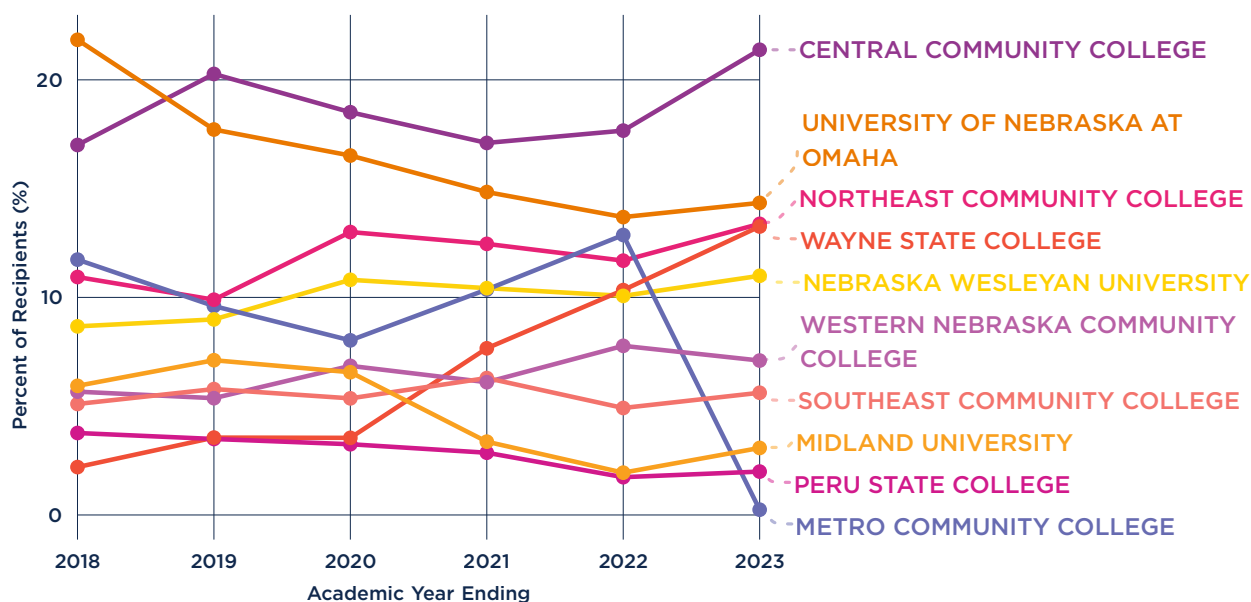
The total number of courses enrolled in and completed by ACE scholarship recipients increased over time. English was the most frequently enrolled subject, followed by mathematics and history.

**TOP 10 COURSE SUBJECTS ENROLLED BY RECIPIENTS  
(ACADEMIC YEARS 2017-18 TO 2022-23)**



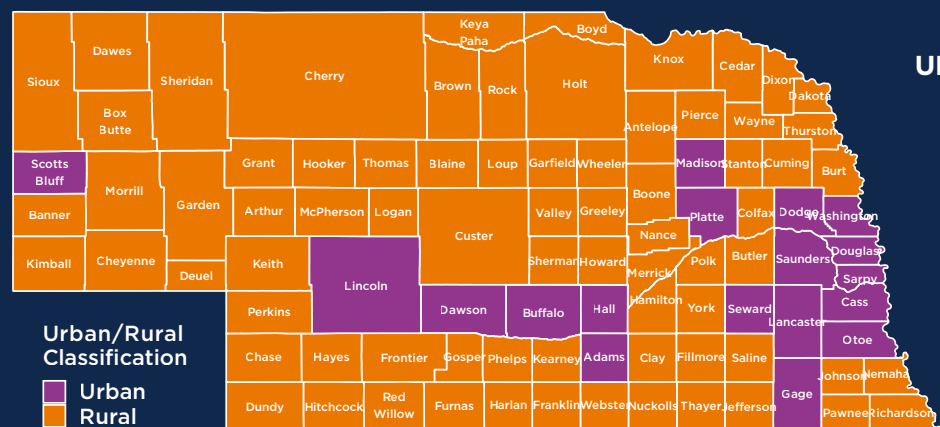
More than half of ACE scholarship recipients enrolled in dual enrollment courses through community colleges. Central Community College (CCC) had a higher percentage of recipients, followed by the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), Northeast Community College (NCC), and Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU). Metropolitan Community College (MCC) had participated consistently but discontinued participation in 2022-23 after it began offering tuition-free dual enrollment.

### TOP 10 PARTICIPATING POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS (ACADEMIC YEARS 2017-18 TO 2022-23)

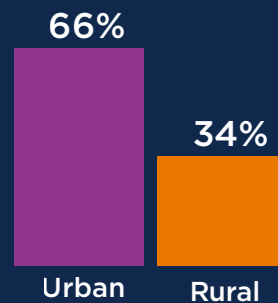


More than two-thirds of ACE recipients were from urban counties. Yet the participation rate in rural counties was comparatively high given that Nebraska's youth population is concentrated in urban areas. Higher youth poverty rates in rural areas may have contributed to this pattern. In addition, more than 40 percent of recipients attended schools serving low-income neighborhoods

### URBAN/RURAL CLASSIFICATION OF NEBRASKA COUNTIES



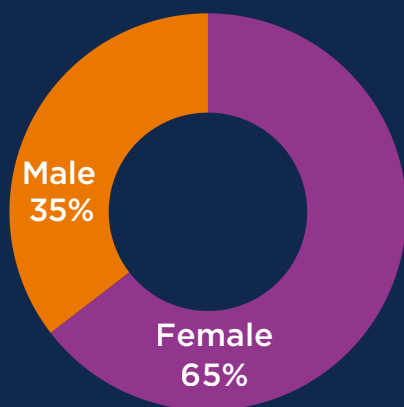
### ACE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS BY URBAN/RURAL COUNTY (ACADEMIC YEARS 2017-18 TO 2022-23)



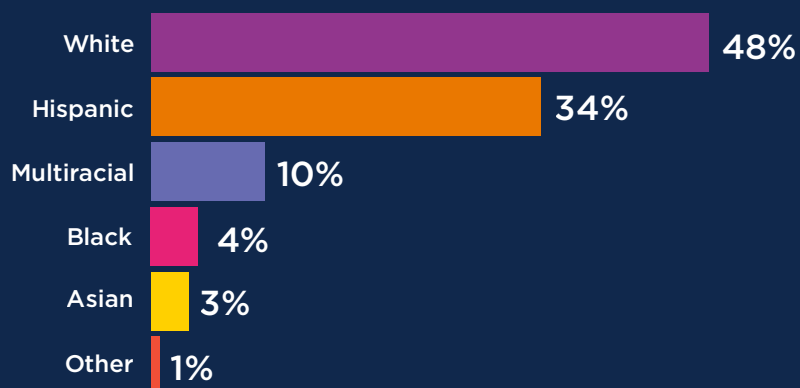
## Demographics & High School Performance

About 65 percent of total ACE participants are female. Roughly half of the participants are White, with strong representation from Hispanic and multiracial students.

**ACE PARTICIPANTS BY SEX  
(2018-2023 COHORTS)**

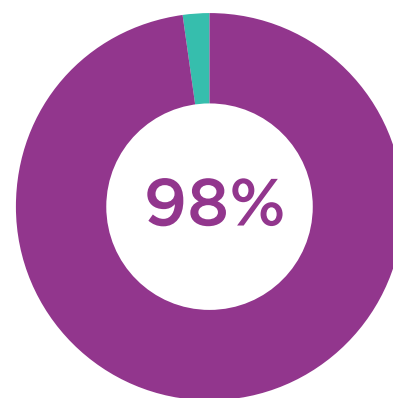


**ACE PARTICIPANTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY  
(2018-2023 COHORTS)**

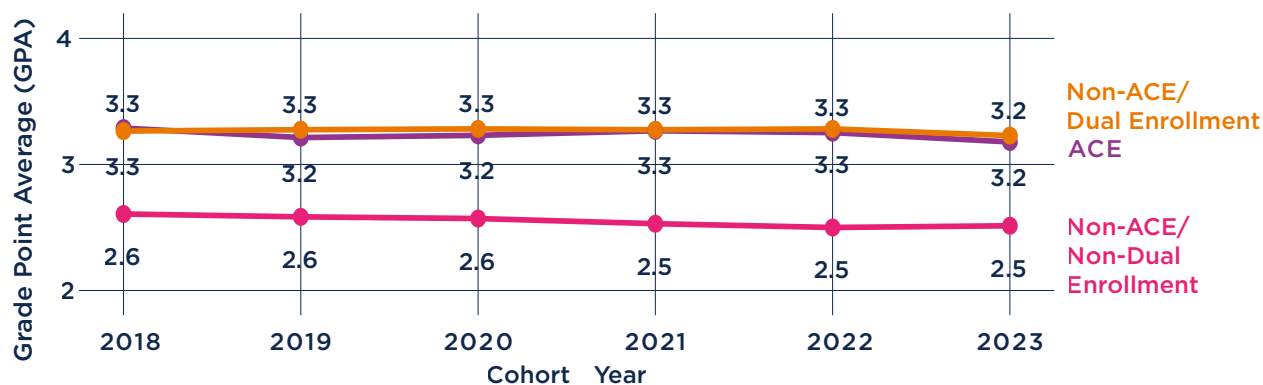


ACE participants earned more high school credits than non-participants. They maintained similar GPAs to non-ACE dual-enrollment students and higher GPAs than non-dual-enrollment students. ACE participants had higher ACT scores than non-dual-enrollment students but lower scores than non-ACE dual-enrollment students and higher GPAs than non-dual-enrollment students. Finally, ACE participants had a high overall high school graduation rate (98 percent).

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION  
RATE OF ACE PARTICIPANTS  
(2018-2023 COHORTS)**



**HIGH SCHOOL GPA OF ACE PARTICIPANTS AND  
COMPARISON GROUPS (2018-2023 COHORTS)**



## Postsecondary Outcomes

### College Going

ACE participants are 11 percentage points more likely to enroll in college. ACE participants had even higher college enrollment rates than non-ACE dual enrollment students. Most participants enrolled in Nebraska public postsecondary institutions (both two-year and four-year institutions).

### Postsecondary Persistence

ACE participants had higher persistence rates at varying rates - a slight improvement at Nebraska public four-year institutions (+2 percentage points) and stronger gains at Nebraska public two-year institutions (+4 percentage points).

### Postsecondary Graduation

ACE participation had no statistically significant impact on postsecondary graduation for students attending Nebraska public four-year institutions; ACE participation had a positive impact on postsecondary graduation of those attending Nebraska public two-year institutions (+5 percentage points).

### Time to Award Attainment

ACE participation had no statistically significant impact on time to award attainment of student attending Nebraska public four-year institutions. ACE participants at Nebraska public two-year institutions graduate about 0.1 years (0.8 months) earlier.

### Cumulative College Credits & GPA

No statistically significant differences are found in cumulative college credits or GPA.

Postsecondary Outcome	Adjusted Differences (95% CI)
College Going	+11% (+10%, +11%)
Persistence (four-year)	+2% (+0%, +3%)
Persistence (two-year)	+4% (+1%, +6%)
Graduation (four-year)	+2% (-1%, +5%)
Graduation (two-year)	+5% (+3%, +8%)
Time to Graduate (four-year)	+0 (-0.1, +0)
Time to Graduate (two-year)	-0.1 (-0.1, +0)
College Credits Cumulative (four-year)	+0.5 (-1.7, +2.8)
College Credits Cumulative (two-year)	-1.5 (-3.2, +0.2)
College GPA Cumulative (four-year)	+0 (-0.1, +0)
College GPA Cumulative (two-year)	+0 (-0.1, +0)

NOTE: Cells highlighted indicate statistically significant estimates.



## *Implications*

ACE effectively promotes college access and persistence, particularly for students attending two-year institutions. However, impacts on academic outcomes from four-year institutions are limited. Expanded funding and removal of course caps (post-2022-23) may enhance future outcomes.



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## **NEBRASKA STATEWIDE WORKFORCE & EDUCATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM**

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