

2010 College Access Challenge Grant

Summary of Proposals

1. EducationQuest Foundation – “8th-9th-10th Grade Initiative”

Project contact: Christine Denicola, executive vice-president

The initiative will work with 8th, 9th, and 10th grade students to increase the number of low-income and underrepresented minorities in higher education. Methods for reaching and encouraging more 8th, 9th, and 10th graders will be:

1. Provide college access training for counselors, teachers, community agencies, and parents;
2. Provide college age students to speak to classes on “I did it, so can you”, and;
3. Provide college access materials for students to understand the requirement for going to college and the classes they need to take to be prepared for college.

The second year funding will be used to test innovative approaches to early college access intervention in ten pilot schools.

Year 1 funding: \$238,300

Year 2 funding: \$204,500

2. Omaha Public Schools – “Careers for Kids Resource Center”

Project contact: Dr. Dennis Pool, assistant superintendent

This is a new program designed to increase the number of underrepresented, low-income families involved in college preparation activities that are intended to help students complete high school and/or enroll in postsecondary education. The program will provide college preparatory activities that enable students and parents to successfully complete college entrance exams, college applications, FAFSA completion, and scholarship applications.

The program will serve a minimum of 200 high school students and parents identified as “placed at-risk” for not enrolling in or completing college. Those students will receive seamless support and opportunities beginning with high school through postsecondary education to post graduation, ensuring living wage employment for participants and participating parents.

Year 1 funding: \$280,000

Year 2 funding: \$280,000

3. Central Plains Center for Services – “Success Through Education”

Project contact: Nancy Ferguson, executive director

This program serves current and former state wards in western Nebraska. It seeks to guarantee that state wards have the opportunity, knowledge, and pathway to explore,

attend and complete a postsecondary education. Activities include developing relationships with high schools and institutions, providing a pathway for students to access and complete their education, and developing educational and financial plans. Ongoing support is provided through mentoring, problem solving, encouragement, and linking students to campus support services, clubs and resources.

Year 1 funding: \$76,000

Year 2 funding: \$76,000

4. Grand Island Public Schools/Central Community College

Project contact: Carol Bryant, Grand Island Public Schools

Originally submitting two separate proposals, these entities will partner to provide college planning information to underrepresented high school students. Through classes and family workshops, students will learn about the college application process, financial planning, and preparing for college. High school counselors will also receive valuable training about college planning.

Year 1 funding: \$223,000

Year 2 funding: \$223,000

5. Mid-Plains Community College – “Building Bridges to College Access”:

Project contact: Terri Burchell, area director of institutional advancement

This program targets students entering their sophomore year through their senior year of high school. It will provide educational presentations and workshops, informational outreach materials, one-on-one guidance and support, early college placement testing and support, links to national resources, and assistance with financial aid and enrollment forms. Mid-Plains will partner with three ESUs in its service area, as well as Valentine High School, Wells Fargo and other area partners to increase the number of underrepresented students who enter and remain in college.

Year 1 funding: \$40,000

Year 2 funding: N/A

6. Ho-Chunk Community Development Corp. – “Challenging Our Youth to Succeed”

Project contact: Frank Schersing, executive director

The proposed funding will be used to form a partnership with the Winnebago/Walthill high school and Ho-Chuck Community Development Corporation, affiliated with the Winnebago Tribe. The purpose is to increase underrepresented Native American students’ and parents’ knowledge of the importance of postsecondary education, knowledge of the importance of preparation for college, knowledge about testing for college, and knowledge about financial aid process and procedures. The program proposes to hire an outreach specialist to assist guidance counselors at the high school, keep lines of communication open between students and parents, and provide early awareness of issues affecting students, parents, and faculty at the high school.

Year 1 funding: \$100,000

Year 2 funding: \$100,000

7. Nebraska Methodist College – “College Challenge”

Project contact: Allison Kinney-Walker, project director

The proposal is to provide college preparation services to at-risk students attending Burke High School in Omaha. The funding would help add new services, expand current services, and offer services to more students than is currently feasible with the Upward Bound Program operated by Nebraska Methodist College. A teacher-mentor program would be implemented, and additional outreach activities would be offered to all students at Burke High School. The program would also offer an incentive savings and matching program for Upward Bound students. The project proposes to increase the GPA of participating students and assist students in learning how to save for college.

Year 1 funding: \$47,000

Year 2 funding: \$47,000

8. Grace University – “College 101”

Project contact: Chris Pruitt, dean of enrollment management

The goal of the College “101” program is to bridge the education and economic gap between groups in Omaha and help address the needs of students of all backgrounds. To accomplish this goal, the program is partnering with Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership and Midlands Latino Development Corporation to educate the underserved families in North and South Omaha about the benefits of higher education and the fundamental steps of applying and paying for higher education. The project is a multi-step approach to help students and families.

The first step is to inform students and families about FAFSA and assist them with completion of the financial aid document. A second step will be an outreach endeavor to younger high school students and parents to help them create a strategic plan for completing high school and continuing their education. A final step will focus on college selection and the application process through workshops and individual assistance.

Year 1 funding: \$19,000

Year 2 funding: \$19,000

9. Bright Futures Foundation – “Building Bright Futures/Bright Futures Foundation Avenue Scholars”

Project contact: Dr. Ken Bird, CEO/president

Bright Futures is a currently operating the program and last year assisted 175 students in four Omaha schools. In the current year, the program added four more schools and served 227 students. The plan is to add more schools, including those across the state, support students in public and private higher education institutions, and support graduates into the workforce. Increased funding from the grant will be used to increase the number of students who graduate from high school and are properly prepared for postsecondary education and improve the success of students in postsecondary education. To accomplish this outcome, the program will hire talent advisors who will monitor and track students in high schools across the state and who will counsel students on the importance of college and support them during college.

Year 1 funding: \$102,700

Year 2 funding: \$102,700