

Building a culture of **college access** and **success** in Nebraska

National and statewide education and business leaders gathered in Lincoln on May 12 for a College Access Summit that highlighted how Nebraska's economic success is dependent on increasing the number of students who achieve a college degree. See page 3 for an overview of the Summit including recommendations from Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation for Education.

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Lumina Foundation President and CEO Jamie Merisotis addresses reporters at the *College Access Summit* as Governor Heineman and University of Nebraska President J.B. Milliken look on.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



The Importance of College Attainment in Nebraska

As keynote speaker for the *College Access Summit* held May 12 in Lincoln, Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation for Education, spoke about Lumina's "Big Goal," which is to ensure that, by 2025, 60 percent of Americans have high quality two-year or four-year degrees—up from the current level of 40 percent.

As part of the "Big Goal," Lumina released a report last September titled "A Stronger Nation through Higher Education – how and why Americans must achieve a 'big goal' for college attainment."

The "why" of the "Big Goal" seems clear: economic viability for the state and its citizens. The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce estimates that 66 percent of Nebraska's jobs will require a postsecondary education by 2018.

In Nebraska, 40.4 percent of residents age 25-64 hold either an associate or bachelor's degree. Nebraska can raise its college attainment rate and reach the "Big Goal" if degree awards increase annually by 4.6 percent.

Lumina's research suggests that one approach would be to target Nebraskans who attended some college but don't have a degree – a number estimated at 230,000 individuals. The research also suggests looking at the geographic distribution of college graduates within the state to see where we can focus efforts to close the achievement gaps (see chart below).

Additionally, the college-going and completion rates of students of color, low-income and first-generation students are significantly lower than middle-class, white students.

Many efforts are underway to improve college access in Nebraska including EducationQuest's programs and services – and eight education goals developed by the Nebraska P-16 Initiative. But there is much more we can do. I urge you to visit EducationQuest.org and read or listen to Mr. Merisotis' remarks and recommendations regarding college access in Nebraska.



Liz S. Koop
President & CEO

Lancaster and Douglas counties have college attainment rates of 49.7 percent and 45.4 percent respectively, but we need to focus on them also as areas of Lincoln and Omaha have populations with lower than average college-going rates.

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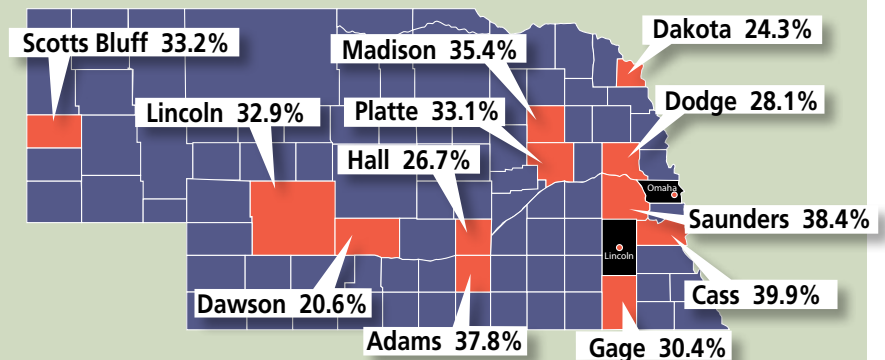
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Counties with college attainment rates less than the state average of 40%



News from the Summit



Lumina President Jamie Merisotis headlines College Access Summit



The Nebraska P-16 Initiative and EducationQuest Foundation sponsored a *College Access Summit* May 12 in Lincoln. The event, titled *Building a Culture of College Access and Success in Nebraska*, brought together education and business leaders from across the state to discuss college access issues and the impact on economic development.

Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation for Education, was the event's keynote speaker. Merisotis leads the nation's largest private foundation committed solely to enrolling and graduating more students from college. Under his leadership, Lumina has embraced an ambitious goal: to ensure that, by 2025, 60 percent of Americans have high quality two-year or four-year degrees—up from the current level of 40 percent.

Merisotis noted many of Nebraska's accomplishments regarding college access but stressed that significant improvement is an absolute necessity if the state hopes to thrive. He highlighted areas of improvement included in the Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education's 2011 Progress Report:

Lumina Foundation, under the leadership of Jamie Merisotis, has embraced a goal that, by 2025, 60 percent of Americans will have a high quality two-year or four-year degree.

Left: Tony Raimondo, Chairman of Behlen Manufacturing and the Nebraska Advanced Manufacturing Coalition, spoke to attendees about the importance of guiding more students into manufacturing careers.

Top center: Stan Carpenter, Chancellor of the Nebraska State College System, chats with Nancy Bond, Supervisor of Counseling for Omaha Public Schools.

Lower Center: Roger Breed, Nebraska Commissioner of Education, and Greg Smith, President of Central Community College, share a lighthearted moment.

Right: Lumina Foundation President and CEO Jamie Merisotis addresses reporters.

- "Even though progress toward the state's higher-education goals is generally in the right direction, it is not aggressive enough to meet the state's long-term needs and goals."
- "The college-going rate of Nebraska high school students continues to improve, but is not high enough to place the state among the top 10 nationally."
- "Freshmen retention rates have risen only slightly since 2004, and college graduation rates also are only slightly higher. Furthermore, graduation rates are significantly lower for Hispanics, Blacks, and Native Americans compared to white and Asian undergraduate students."
- "Our needy students—particularly males—are enrolling and succeeding in higher education at much lower rates than their higher-income classmates."

Summit news continued on page 8.

Counselors, agency reps learn importance of early college awareness

Nearly 180 guidance counselors, educators and community agency representatives who work with 8th, 9th and 10th grade students participated in EducationQuest Foundation's *Early College Awareness Training* held during April and May across Nebraska.

EducationQuest coordinated the training sessions to provide participants with tools, resources and information they can use to help young students get on the path to college. Topics included the importance of early college awareness, the *KnowHow2GO* Program, the Gallup Student Poll (Hope Survey), tips for enhancing the college-going culture at schools and agencies, and free college planning tools and resources from EducationQuest.

Featured speakers included **Patricia Martin** from the College Board and **Valerie Calderon** and **JerLene Mosley** from The Gallup Organization.

Early College Awareness Training was held in South Sioux City, Mahoney State Park (for Lincoln and Omaha area attendees) and Kearney. The training scheduled for Scottsbluff was cancelled due to weather and was held as a webinar.

If you missed the training and would like an overview, see the *Early College Awareness Training* article at EducationQuest.org.



Above: Les Monroe, Director of College Planning for EducationQuest, explains college funding options for students.

Lower left: Patricia Martin, Assistant Vice-President of the National Office of School Counselor Advocacy for the College Board, talks to attendees about the importance of early college awareness.

Lower right: Ralph Schnell and Marilynn Peaslee, Guidance Counselors at Lincoln Northeast High School, discuss the importance of campus visits for students.

Advisory Group providing input on 8th, 9th and 10th grade efforts

EducationQuest has enlisted the help of 14 counselors, educators and agency representatives from the across the state to serve on an 8th-10th grade advisory group that provides input on college access efforts for younger students.

Advisory group members are:

Rick Cantril, Guidance Counselor,
Scottsbluff High School

David Clausen, Lead Teacher, Gateway to
Learning/South Sioux City Community Schools

Terri Gross, Guidance Counselor, Madison High School

Marie Hykel, Grants Coordinator,
Bryan Middle School/AIM Institute, Omaha

Mary Janata, Guidance Counselor,
West Point-Beemer High School

Nicole Juranek, Director of Corporate Relations,
Heartland Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Lincoln

Kristin Lautenbach, Teacher, Park Middle School

Tom Miller, Recruiting and Training Specialist,
TeamMates Mentoring Program

Betsy Noller, Guidance Counselor, Lexington High School

Priscilla Petsch, College Access Coach, Mickle Middle School

Ralph Schnell, Guidance Counselor,
Lincoln Northeast High School

Jere Sue Schroer, Guidance Counselor,
Horizon/Sunrise Middle Schools, Kearney

Becky Tegler, Guidance Counselor,
Lincoln North Star High School

Bryson Wiser, Guidance Counselor,
Omaha North High School

During meetings over the past year, the group has shared college access efforts and challenges at their schools and agencies – and has provided input on EducationQuest efforts such as *Early College Awareness Training* (see above article) and the new *KnowHow2GO Handbook* for 8th, 9th and 10th grade students (see article on p. 5).

Kristin Ageton leading middle school efforts



EducationQuest is pleased to introduce **Kristin Ageton** as College Access Manager for Middle Schools. Kristin is part of a new EducationQuest College Access Department that is coordinating statewide efforts for middle school students, counselors and educators.

In her role, Kristin oversees many of EducationQuest's *KnowHow2GO* efforts including the *KnowHow2GONebraska Ambassador Program* in which college students present college planning information to middle and high school students. She also coordinates and conducts college access presentations for middle school students and educators, and helps with college access efforts in northeast Nebraska, western Nebraska and in Lincoln.

If you have questions about EducationQuest's programs and services for middle school students, contact Kristin at KristinA@educationquest.org or 402.479.6745.



Two eighth graders complete a *KnowHow2GO* activity at the Big Red Stars event.

Eighth graders learn about **KnowHow2GO** at Big Red Stars event

Over 250 eighth grade students from across the state descended on the Lied Center in Lincoln May 12 for the Big Red Stars Recognition Ceremony sponsored by the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and EducationQuest. The students were recognized for their academic excellence, leadership and perseverance.

EducationQuest staff members and college students who serve as *KnowHow2GO Ambassadors* were on hand to guide students through interactive activities that reinforced the four steps of *KnowHow2GO*.



New **KnowHow2GO** handbook will help younger students plan for college and a career

In early August, Nebraska middle schools and high schools will receive a shipment of new, colorful handbooks that will help younger students plan for college and a career. The publication is called the *KnowHow2GO Handbook – College & Career Planning for 8th, 9th and 10th Grade Students*.

This 28-page handbook will guide students, parents and mentors through *the four steps of KnowHow2GO*:

- STEP 1 Be a pain – in a good way.** Find an adult to help guide you to college.
- STEP 2 Push yourself.** Take tough courses during high school and get involved in extracurricular activities.
- STEP 3 Find the right fit.** Explore your career interests and research colleges that fit your interests.
- STEP 4 Put your hands on some cash.** Apply for scholarships and financial aid.

The Handbook also includes a 12-page career exploration section.

The *KnowHow2GO Handbook* will replace the *Exploring College* and *Exploring Careers* publications schools previously provided by EducationQuest.



EducationQuest to launch new website

Over the summer, we'll be busy redesigning our EducationQuest website. The new site, which will be ready in August, will be audience-driven with clearly-marked sections for:

- 8th, 9th and 10th Grade Students
- 11th – 12th Grade Students
- Students Transitioning to College
- Adult Learners
- Middle School / High School Professionals
- College Professionals
- Community Agency Professionals

The site will also provide easy access to our online tools and resources.

The web address for the new site will continue to be **EducationQuest.org**. We will integrate the *KnowHow2GONEbraska* website into the new site, but will continue to promote the **KnowHow2GONEbraska.org** web address, which will take visitors to the new 8th, 9th and 10th grade section.

EducationQuest names new Advisory Council members



David Duzik



Vann Price



Susan Townsend



Dr. Jeffrey West

EducationQuest has named four new members to its Advisory Council – a group of 15 statewide education and community representatives who advise EducationQuest on programs and services that support its mission of improving access to higher education in Nebraska.

The new members are **David Duzik**, Director of Admissions, Nebraska Wesleyan University; **Vann Price**, Associate Principal, Lincoln North Star High School; **Susan Townsend**, Guidance Counselor, Lefler Middle School in Lincoln; and **Dr. Jeffrey West**, Administrator, Educational Service Unit 13 in Scottsbluff.

Advisory Council members help EducationQuest identify obstacles to higher education; brainstorm and prioritize college-access programs, services and needs; and serve on a scholarship or grant review committee.

Others serving on the Advisory Council are **Kaye Bartels-Eiland**, Southeast Community College; **Nancy Bond**, Omaha Public Schools; **Terri Graham**, Hastings College; **Fran Hassler**, Ponca High School; **Marty Mahler, Ph.D.**, Nebraska P-16 Initiative; **Dusty Newton**, University of Nebraska at Kearney; **Vaughn Robertson**, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; **Larry Scherer**, Nebraska State Education Association; **Jere Sue Schroer**, Sunrise Middle School, Kearney; **Dolores Simpson-Kirkland, Ph.D.**, Lincoln Southwest High School; and **Doug Watson**, Midland University, Fremont.

EducationQuest mourns the loss of a friend and colleague

Tammi Preston



1961-2011

“Do one thing every day that scares you.”

— one of Tammi's favorite quotes by Eleanor Roosevelt

EducationQuest staff, along with agency and school representatives and students, were saddened by the loss of **Tammi Preston** who passed away unexpectedly February 5, 2011.

As EducationQuest's Director of Outreach Services, Tammi traveled to community agencies and schools throughout southeast Nebraska where she counseled disadvantaged students about ways to make college possible. Tammi also directed Outreach Services throughout the entire state and coordinated statewide *College Access Training* for agency professionals. Her tireless efforts made college possible for hundreds of students.

Sue Herdt, a counselor at Minatare High School, summed up how many felt about Tammi:

“Tammi's family and loved ones can rest assured that her time spent on earth was spent in the servitude of others. She helped others realize their dreams...what a legacy! All of the people she helped may not remember her name, but they remember vividly what she did and how she made them feel. What a gift.”

Treve Florum has taken over as Director of Outreach Services. He previously served as Outreach Services Manager in Kearney serving clients in central and western Nebraska. He will relocate to Lincoln and, in addition to directing statewide services, will provide direct services to agencies in southeast Nebraska.

EducationQuest will hire a new Outreach Services Manager for central and western Nebraska.



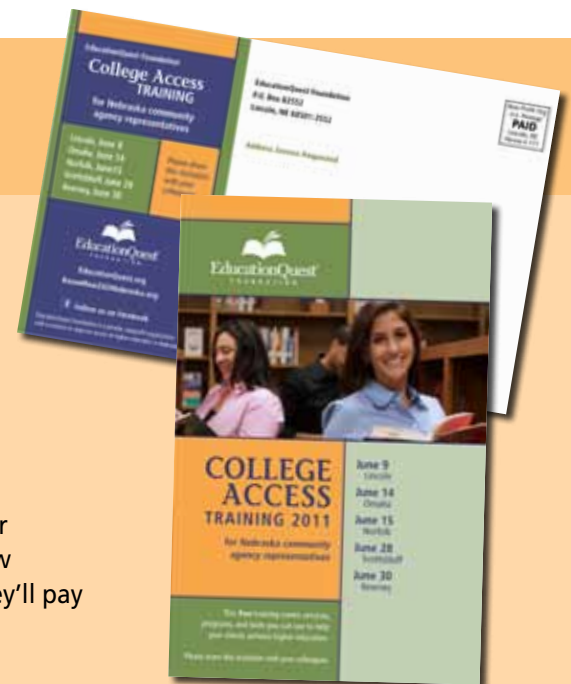
Treve Florum

College Access Training underway for agency representatives

EducationQuest is conducting statewide *College Access Training* for community agency representatives during June. During the one-day training sessions, attendees are learning about resources available to help their clients achieve higher education. The sessions are:

- **Thursday, June 9** – Lincoln
- **Tuesday, June 14** – Omaha
- **Wednesday, June 15** – Norfolk
- **Tuesday, June 28** – Scottsbluff
- **Thursday, June 30** – Kearney

Topics include: EducationQuest programs and services; how agencies can partner with Nebraska Area Health Education Centers; Federal financial aid update; How EducationQuest's *College Funding Estimator* can help clients determine how they'll pay for college; and programs offered by Central Plains Center for Services.



Address Service Requested

What's happening with Nebraska's P-16 Education Goals?

EducationQuest, a co-sponsor of the Nebraska P-16 Initiative, has produced brochures that provide updates on the status of eight education goals announced by Nebraska P-16 in August 2009. To request a copy of the brochure, contact **Dr. Marty Mahler**, Executive Director of the Nebraska P-16 Initiative at mmahler@nebraska.edu or 402-472-5991.



College Access Summit News

continued from page 3...

Merisotis said there are three essential steps that Nebraska needs to take to put itself on track for economic vitality, continuing job growth, and social stability:

- First, set specific college-completion goals.
- Second, report progress publicly, using common completion metrics.
- And finally, align funding to meet the goals.

To read the full text of Merisotis' recommendations for Nebraska, see the *College Access Summit* article at EducationQuest.org.

Other speakers at the *College Access Summit* were Governor **Dave Heineman**, **Jim Hermes**, Director of Government Relations for the American Association of Community Colleges, and **J.B. Milliken**, President of the University of Nebraska.

The event also featured an afternoon panel discussion among business and education leaders including **Jane Miller**, Chief Operating Officer, Gallup Organization; **Dirk Petersen**, General Manager, Nucor Steel; **Tony Raimondo**, Chairman, Behlen Mfg., Dream It, Do It Campaign; **Stan Carpenter**, Chancellor, Nebraska State College System; **Dr. Greg Smith**, President, Central Community College; and **Dr. Steve Joel**, Superintendent, Lincoln Public Schools.

Video clips of the Summit speakers are available at EducationQuest.org.

