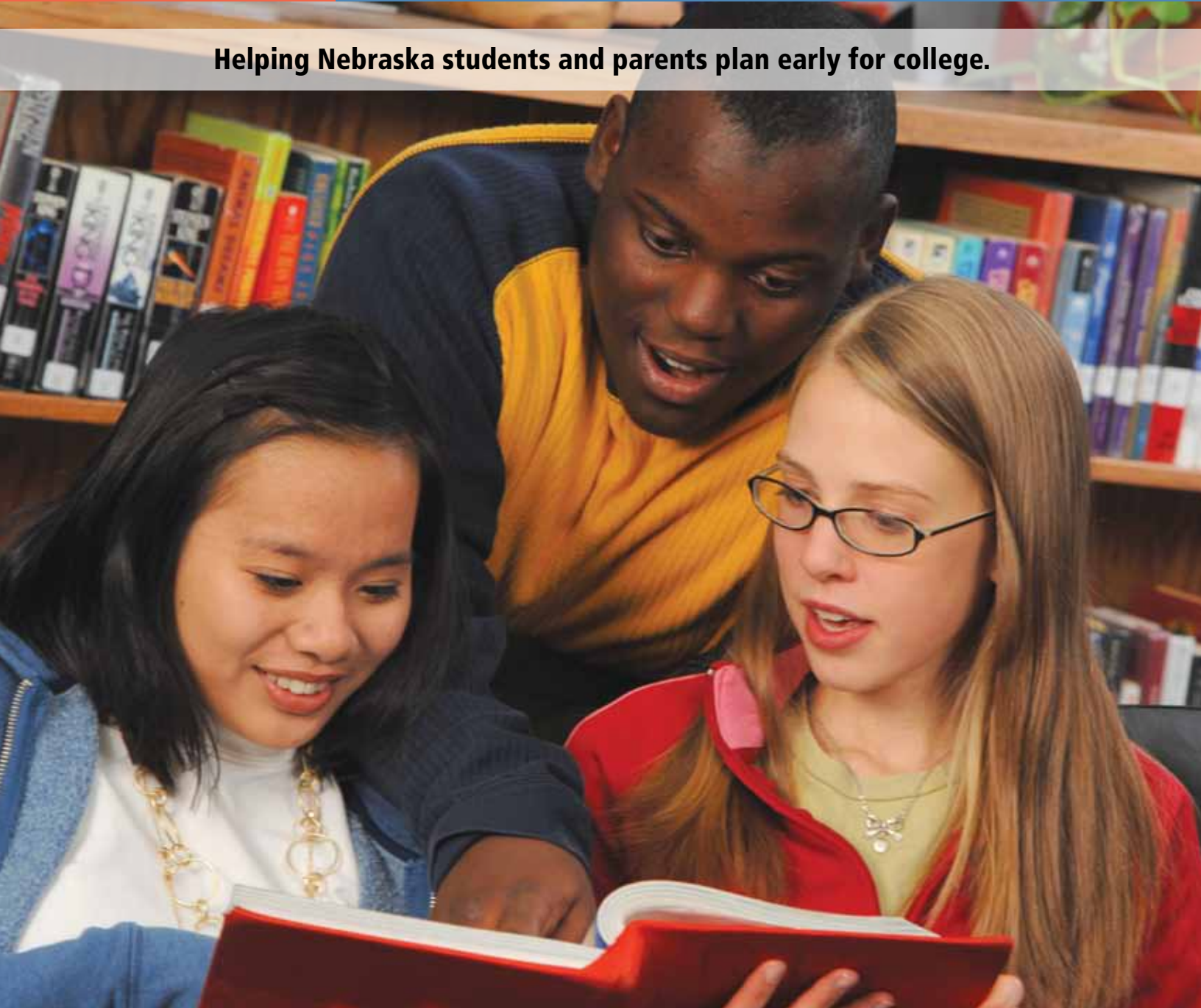


Exploring College

Helping Nebraska students and parents plan early for college.



Want to
KnowHow2GO
to college?



Here are

4 STEPS

that will help make
college a reality.

1. Be a pain – in a good way.
2. Push yourself.
3. Find the right fit.
4. Put your hands on some cash.

KnowHow2GO to college!

Follow
the

4
STEPS

EducationQuest Foundation is proud to sponsor the **KnowHow2GO** program in Nebraska. This program is designed to help you understand the steps you should take to make college a reality.

This publication will walk you and your parents or a mentor through the four **KnowHow2GO** steps:

1. **Be a pain – in a good way.**
2. **Push yourself.**
3. **Find the right fit.**
4. **Put your hands on some cash.**

If you follow these steps throughout high school, you can make it to college. But first, what do we mean by “college?”

The term “college” covers many types of educational opportunities after high school – anything from a four-year university to a community college to a trade school.

As you explore your skills and interests you can determine the type of college that will best fit your needs.

Why is college important?

Here's what a degree will get you:

- **Bigger bucks.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, graduates from a Nebraska four-year college earn about \$15,000 more per year than a high school graduate and about \$20,000 more than a high school dropout.
- **A better job.** Because of new technology, more employers require education beyond high school. You'll have a better selection of jobs and a good chance of finding a career you enjoy.
- **Important skills.** In addition to job skills, you'll learn important communication, thinking and social skills.

KnowHow2GO is sponsored nationally by Lumina Foundation for Education, American Council on Education and the Ad Council.

Parents...

Your involvement and encouragement throughout middle school and high school are vital to your student's future success. This publication will help by guiding you and your student through four important college planning steps.

These steps are written for your student. By reviewing them with him or her, you'll find there are ways to make college a reality. For additional help with college planning, visit KnowHow2GONebraska.org or EducationQuest.org where you can access free tools and resources.



STEP 1 Be a pain – in a good way.

Tell everyone you know that you want to go to college. Tell your parents, mentor, teachers, counselors, coaches, and clergy members. Keep asking until you find an adult who will help you.

This step is essential. This person can help you stay on the right track to college by:

- making sure you're meeting academic requirements
- guiding you to resources if you're struggling with classes
- helping you explore career interests
- setting up visits to area colleges
- helping you complete financial aid and college applications
- providing ongoing encouragement

The next three steps become easier with a supportive adult.

For additional resources, visit KnowHow2GONebraska.org and click on "Find Help Near You." You'll find a list of organizations prepared to help you make college a reality.



good WORDS *to know*

Become familiar with these words and terms as you prepare for college.

ACT/SAT – college entrance exams required for admission into most colleges. Midwest colleges typically prefer the ACT.

Associate Degree – a college degree received after completing a two-year program of study.

Bachelor s-Degree – a college degree received after completing a four-year program of study.

College/University (four-year) – an institution that offers bachelor's degrees in a variety of majors. Many also offer advanced degrees such as master's and doctorates.

Community College (two-year) – an institution that offers certificates, diplomas and associate degrees in a variety of programs.

Private Career School (for-profit) – an institution that specializes in technology-related fields or trades and awards diplomas, certificates and associate degrees.

Grade Point Average (GPA) – a system to evaluate students' academic performance based on their grades throughout high school.

Major – a student's academic field of specialization in college.

STEP 2 Push yourself.

WHY you should take TOUGH courses in high school:

It may be hard to think about college when it seems so far off. But the fact is...you need to take tough classes NOW if you want to make it to college later. Here are some reasons why...

- **Most colleges won't admit you** unless you take required courses. Ask your counselor, a parent or another adult to help you set up a four-year coursework plan that will ensure admission into college. See "Required Courses" on this page for an overview.
- **You're more apt to earn higher scores** on the ACT and/or SAT college entrance exams. The knowledge you gain by taking tough classes will come in handy on test day.
- **You're more likely to earn academic scholarships.** Many colleges award scholarships based on your ACT or SAT scores.
- **Colleges will be more impressed** if you earn respectable grades in challenging courses than outstanding grades in easy classes. So don't take easy classes just to pad your grade point average.
- **You may be able to earn some college credit** while in high school. Ask your counselor about Dual Credit and Advanced Placement courses that may be offered at your high school. These can help you get a head start on college.
- **You'll have a better chance of succeeding in college.** College courses are challenging! By taking tough courses during high school, you'll be prepared.

Required courses for admission into college

Colleges require you to take certain courses during high school to qualify for admission. Work with your counselor to set up a four-year plan that will ensure admission into college. Follow these guidelines:

- English** 4 years of intensive reading and writing.
- Math** 4 years including Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry.
- Social Studies** 3 years including American History, World History, American Government or Geography.
- Natural Sciences** 3 years including Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Earth Sciences.
- World Language** 2 years of the same language (some colleges require four years).

Ask your counselor about high school graduation requirements because they may differ.

Parents...

How to help your student succeed

- Get involved at your student's school. It can be as simple as attending parent/teacher conferences and booster club meetings – or emailing your child's teachers regularly for progress updates. Your involvement will help your child succeed.
- Provide a quiet place for your student to study stocked with supplies such as a dictionary, calculator and note cards. Set rules and expectations for completion of work and study. Limit access to television, Internet and telephone until assignments are completed.



Learn how to Study

Follow these study tips to earn good grades throughout middle and high school:

Same time, same place. Try to study in the same place and same time each day. Find a quiet place that's free from distractions. Sorry ... that means no TV, text messaging or social networking.

Use a planner. It's a great way to keep up with homework assignments and other extracurricular activities. By staying organized, you'll have more time for the things you like to do.

Break it up. If you have lengthy or long-term projects, break them into manageable tasks and set due dates for each one.

Do the difficult homework first. Your brain is fresher and you'll feel better getting it out of the way.

Take notes while you're reading. This is especially helpful if it's a lengthy reading assignment. This will help you retain the information and will keep your mind from wandering.

Get involved!

Another way to "push yourself" is to get involved in school and community activities. Here's how you'll benefit:



You'll have a better chance of earning scholarships. Many are based on extracurricular activities and community service.

You'll explore potential career interests. Think you might want to work in the medical profession? Volunteer at a hospital or nursing home. Interested in politics? Try running for student council. You get the idea...

You'll make new friends. And they'll be friends who share your interests.

You'll become more organized. Let's face it, the busier you are the more organized you have to be. Remember to be selective and choose activities that strongly appeal to you.

It gives you an "out." If friends suggest activities that could be trouble, your busy schedule provides the perfect excuse to say no.

You'll work with adults who can help shape your life. Whether it's a coach, yearbook advisor or youth group leader – you'll work with strong adult mentors who can help keep your life on track.

It's fun! Talk to any student who's involved in extracurricular activities, they'll tell you it's a good time.

Use the *Activities Resume* at KnowHow2GONebraska.org to track your activities throughout high school – then the information is readily available when it's time to apply for scholarships and college admission.

STEP 3 Find the right fit.

Nebraska has nearly 60 four-year colleges, community colleges and trade schools with a wide variety of degrees. Before you consider which school you want to attend, think about your interests, skills and talents. This will help you identify fields you might like to pursue. Then you can research colleges that will be the right fit for you.

Think about potential careers:

- **What do you like to do?** Do you enjoy outdoor activities? Do you like to draw? What topics interest you - history, astronomy, computers?
- **What are your talents?** Do you excel in math or English? Are you a good artist? Are you good at fixing or building things?
- **How do you envision your future?** How much money do you want to make? What kind of work schedule do you want? Where do you want to live?

Your answers will direct you to high school courses and clubs that will help you develop your strengths and lead you to a future career.

To find information about careers in Nebraska, talk to your guidance counselor and visit NebraskaCareerConnections.org. To learn about careers that match your interests, visit bls.gov/k12/ and MappingYourFuture.org/PlanYourCareer.

Start researching colleges

Once you have an idea of the type of career you wish to pursue, find out what kind of education is required. For example:

- If you want to be an x-ray technician, this is typically a two-year program at certain Nebraska community colleges and hospitals.
- If you wish to be a teacher, you'll need a four-year bachelor's degree.
- A career as an architect usually requires a master's degree – which means at least six years of college.

To research colleges that may be the right fit for you, see *College Profiles* at EducationQuest.org and ask your guidance counselor about college search tools at your school.



Parents...

How you can help with career planning

- Talk to your student about his or her interests, abilities, talents, and goals.
- Know what is going on in school and with your student's studies.
- Make sure your student is in school every day, on time, and ready to learn.
- Give your student responsibilities around the home.
- Talk about education opportunities beyond high school - college, tech school, community college, military service, apprenticeships, and specialized programs.
- Talk about your job and career in a positive manner.

Source: Omaha Public Schools A+ Career PREP Program

STEP 4 Put your hands on some *Cash*.

What is financial aid?

Financial aid can include money that you don't repay such as **scholarships, grants and work-study** (on-campus jobs). It can also include **student loans** which you will have to repay – but not until after you graduate from college.

How do you get financial aid?

When you're a senior in high school, you'll complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) indicating your family's income and assets. Based on that information, your college will determine the type of financial aid you're eligible to receive.



Average tuition rates in Nebraska

Here's a sample of average annual tuition rates in Nebraska:

- **Two-year public college** \$ 2,400 - \$ 3,200
- **Four-year public college** \$ 5,000 - \$ 7,300
- **Four-year private college** \$16,000 - \$30,000

You'll also need to consider the cost of books and fees and, if you live on campus, room and board expenses.

Use the *College Funding Planner* at EducationQuest.org to estimate future college costs.

Parents...

This step provides basic information about ways to pay for college. You will receive more detailed information when your student is a junior or senior in high school.

When you and your student look at the cost of college, you may experience "sticker shock." But before you let the cost keep you from considering college, keep in mind that your student will receive some type of financial aid – if you apply for it!

What are other ways to make college affordable?

Scholarships

Scholarships are usually based on academics, leadership, community service, or talents such as music, drama or sports. Some scholarships are also available for those who show financial need. For information on over 2,000 Nebraska-based scholarships, see *ScholarshipQuest* at EducationQuest.org.

College Savings Plans

- **Start a savings account.** If you have a part-time job, save much of what you earn for college. If a relative gives you birthday money, stash it away.
- **Invest in the College Savings Plan of Nebraska.** This "529 Plan" offers tax benefits for parents who invest money toward their child's education.
- **Consider a Certificate of Deposit.** The interest rate is usually higher than a savings account. Shop for the best rate and terms.

Community College Academic Transfer Program

If you're striving for a four-year degree, consider starting at a less expensive community college for basic courses and then transfer to a four-year college.

Live at Home

Room and board at a four-year college runs about \$7,000 a year. If you live at home, that money can go toward tuition and fees.

The Military

All branches of the military offer educational benefits for college. Talk to a recruiter for all the details.



About

EducationQuest Foundation

We offer **free** college planning services to Nebraska students and families. Visit EducationQuest.org and KnowHow2GONebraska.org where you'll find:

KnowHow2GO Guided Tour – this tool will help you prepare for college.

Activities Resume™ – tracks your extracurricular activities, honors and awards.

College Profiles™ – provides information about Nebraska and nationwide schools.

College Funding Planner™ – estimates future college costs and the monthly savings required.

"College Doesn't Just Happen" video - walks you through the four steps to college.



When college draws nearer, we'll help you

- narrow your college selection
- look for scholarships
- apply for financial aid

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