



# ANNUAL REPORT **FY20**



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# FROM THE DIRECTOR

To say this year was a challenge would be an understatement.

When I took the reins of Iowa College Aid in January, the agency was marking happy milestones: We had just launched a texting program, the new Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship was a huge success, FAFSA filing rates and Course to College participation were well ahead of last year, and our GEAR UP Iowa students were about to graduate from high school. And then ...

Suddenly I was not only getting my bearings in a new job, but also managing a staff that had shifted to teleworking nearly overnight—and we were trying to maintain connections with schools and students who had moved just as quickly to all-virtual learning environments. These changes played out against a backdrop of anxiety about our collective health and safety.

To say that staff rose to these challenges would be another understatement.

Even as they set up home offices in spare rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, and basements, Iowa College Aid employees were already establishing new avenues to support Iowa schools, students, and families. They gave themselves crash courses in webinar and telemeeting platforms. They monitored constantly changing situations and distributed clear, current information. They reached out to check on each other.

This report is a snapshot of a truly unique period for our agency. It is also a reflection of the creativity, flexibility, and dedication of the people who work here.



Mark Wiederspan  
Executive Director  
Iowa College Aid



# IOWA COLLEGE AID

**Our motto**, “Because College Changes Everything,” is borne out in the many and varied benefits of higher education. As individuals, college graduates earn higher wages, are more likely to hold jobs, and report greater satisfaction with their lives. As workers, they make their communities economically stronger and more competitive. As taxpayers, they contribute more while relying less on social services. As members of their communities, they are more likely to be active by donating, voting, and volunteering. As parents, they raise children who are more likely to go to college, extending the advantages through generations.

Just as the benefits of higher education spread across many areas, increasing college access and success requires a multitude of interconnected efforts. Iowa College Aid supports students and families through every step of the college-going process with services and aid that reach students directly, along with initiatives based in schools and communities.

Local College Access Networks and GEAR UP Iowa help to build early awareness of college and career possibilities, starting in the middle and even elementary school years. Activities like academic coaching, soft skills building, and campus and workplace visits encourage young students to begin planning for their paths beyond high school.

In the high school years, Course to College and the Iowa College and Career Readiness Academy provide tools and resources for school counselors and other college access professionals as they create a college-going culture in their schools and communities. LCANs work with leaders from the business, education, and nonprofit sectors to identify and address barriers to higher education. At the student level, AmeriCorps College Access Coaches offer direct peer-to-peer assistance. Websites, social media, and free publications guide students and families through the complex process of applying for college and financial aid.

**Our work is not finished** when students enroll in college. Financial, academic, and social support continue to be key to their success. Grant and scholarship programs for Iowa undergraduates increase their chances of graduating and reduce the amount of debt they incur. AmeriCorps College Success Coaches, Virtual College Coach, and GEAR UP Iowa all help students make the transition to college. Even after college, loan repayment programs help graduates pay off their student loan debt.

Support for college students also takes the form of consumer protection. Iowa College Aid is the state agency that evaluates and authorizes higher education institutions to operate in Iowa or to offer distance education to Iowans. In that role, we also handle student questions, concerns, and complaints.

Along with all these student-directed services, Iowa College Aid has a research team that produces trusted, reliable data about higher education in Iowa. This information might be as broad as a statewide report or as targeted as a dashboard for a single legislative district. Sound research helps us analyze our own programs and helps stakeholders make informed, data-driven decisions that benefit Iowans.

**These intertwined efforts** are difficult to capture in a brief description, but we hope this report will help you understand both their individual functions and their interconnections. Together, they all work toward fulfilling our mission and vision, always with “Because College Changes Everything” foremost in our minds.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## OUR MISSION

We advocate for and support Iowans as they explore, finance, and complete educational opportunities beyond high school to increase family and community success.

## OUR MOTTO

Because college changes everything.

## OUR VISION

All Iowans can achieve an education beyond high school.

## AGENCY STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Be a trusted source of information for Iowa residents and higher education stakeholders on postsecondary education access, affordability, success, and completion.
2. Align programs and services with the postsecondary needs of Iowa residents and key stakeholders.
3. Increase and align resources to support agency programs and services.

# AGENCY HISTORY

- 1963** Higher Education Facilities Commission created to administer federal grants for construction of academic facilities
- 1960s** Becomes state-designated guarantor for the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP); begins administering state grants, scholarships and loan forgiveness
- 1969** Iowa Tuition Grant begins
- 1973** Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant begins
- 1978** Renamed Iowa College Aid Commission
- 1996** Iowa National Guard Educational Assistance Grant (NGEAP) begins
- 2007** All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship begins
- 2008** First GEAR UP Iowa grant begins
- 2009** I Have a Plan Iowa (IHAPI) begins
- 2010** FFELP eliminated; sponsors Iowa Financial Literacy Program (IFLP)
- 2012** FFELP portfolio transferred to Ascendium Education Group, then known as Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation; Kibbie Grant (Iowa Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant) begins
- 2013** Course to College (then known as 3-Step Process) begins
- 2014** First Local College Access Network (LCAN) begins; second GEAR UP Iowa grant begins
- 2015** IFLP transferred to Iowa Insurance Division
- 2016** Iowa Go Alliance Academy begins
- 2017** Course to College Corps (the precursor to College Access and College Success AmeriCorps) begins
- 2018** Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy replaces Iowa Go Alliance Academy
- 2019** Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Future Ready Iowa Grant begin
- 2020** Virtual College Coach begins

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## Dr. Michael Ash



President, Southeastern  
Community College  
Represents community  
colleges\*

## Ms. Melissa Hidalgo



Represents Iowa college  
students\*

## Mr. Doug Shull, Vice Chair



Represents general  
public\*

## Mr. Manny Atwood



School Counselor,  
Central Decatur School  
Represents K-12  
practitioners\*

## Sen. Tim Kraayenbrink



Represents Iowa  
Senate\*\*

## Ms. Barbara Sloniker



Represents parents of  
Iowa students\*

## Ms. Sherry Bates



Regent, State Board  
of Regents  
Represents State Board  
of Regents

## Dr. Kathleen Mulholland, Chair



Represents general  
public\*

## Ms. Emily Stork



Represents general  
public\*

## Rep. Cecil Dolecheck



Represents Iowa  
House\*\*

## Dr. Mark Putnam



President, Central  
College  
Represents private  
colleges and universities\*

## Mr. Jeremy Varner



Division Administrator,  
Community Colleges  
Represents Iowa  
Department of  
Education

## Mr. Timothy Fitzgibbon



Represents general  
public\*

## Sen. Herman Quirnbach



Represents Iowa  
Senate\*\*

## Rep. Cindy Winckler

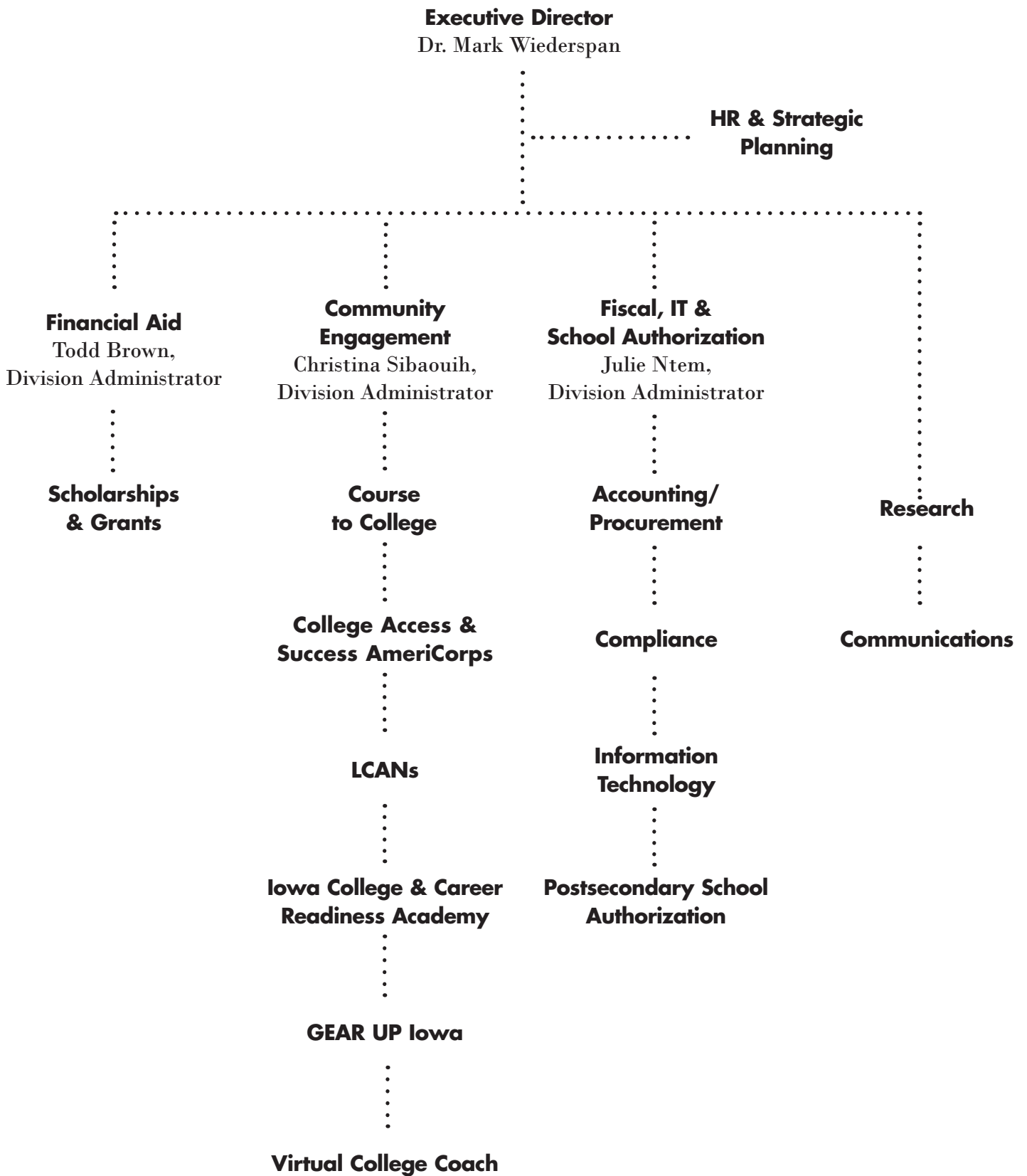


Represents Iowa  
House\*\*

\*Appointed by the Governor

\*\*Ex officio (nonvoting)

# DIVISIONS & TEAMS





# FY20 IN REVIEW

## JULY 2019

- GEAR UP staff and coaches attend the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships/GEAR UP annual conference in San Francisco.
- Four GEAR UP Iowa students attend the Youth Leadership Summit in San Francisco.
- Iowa College Aid releases a report on FAFSA filing trends in Iowa.
- Community Engagement consultant Rohey Sallah presents at the National College Attainment Network's first #FormYourFuture FAFSA Completion Institute in Dallas.
- A Facebook campaign promotes the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, and visits to the program's web page triple in two weeks.
- Grants are awarded to the Story County CAN and the OPT-in CAN for System Involved Youth, bringing the total of Local College Access Networks in Iowa to 13.

## AUGUST 2019

- Iowa College Aid's booth at the Iowa State Fair (*right*) invites visitors to take an informal poll about how college will change them.
- Staff meet with representatives of community colleges, the Governor's office, and other state agencies to discuss adjustments to the Last-Dollar Scholarship.
- ACT highlights the success of GEAR UP Iowa's districtwide ACT testing on its GEAR UP Toolkit web page.
- Division Administrator Todd Brown is chosen president-elect of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs.
- GEAR UP Iowa's BIG Dream Gathering draws 199 Des Moines students and family members and 35 exhibitors.
- Course to College launches for 2019-20, with the new component of mini grants for Partner sites.
- GEAR UP Iowa conducts a professional development seminar at the Blank Park Zoo for coaches, staff, and students.
- The AmeriCorps program expands to add Student Leaders who will serve as peer mentors to high school classmates.
- LCA staff, coordinators, and team members attend the Maritime Training Academy in Michigan.
- Community Engagement Consultant Jamie Covell is appointed to the National College Attainment Network Advisory Task Force.
- Jamie Covell's job transitions to 100 percent Course to College, with Community Engagement Consultant Megan Sibbel taking over the Dubuque LCA.



## SEPTEMBER 2019

- Iowa's Area Education Agencies approve a new course in the Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy curriculum on equity for traditionally underrepresented students.
- Division Administrator Todd Brown presents to the Legislative Fiscal Committee Meeting on the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship.
- The LCAN team launches a monthly newsletter.
- Executive Director Karen Misjak announces that she will retire in January.
- Community Engagement staff attend a two-day National Postsecondary Strategy Institute workshop at Des Moines Area Community College. Iowa College Aid is a sponsor.
- Liz Yaddof joins the Community Engagement team to lead the new Virtual College Coach texting campaign.
- Iowa College Aid joins the Attorney General's Office in cautioning students about income-sharing agreements.
- Nearly 200 GEAR UP Iowa students attend Experience Iowa State Day.
- The Commission Board approves statutory changes to address eligibility gaps in the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship.

## OCTOBER 2019

- The FAFSA and Iowa Financial Aid Application open October 1. In the first two days, 660 Iowans submit the IFAA, compared to 370 at the same point last year.
- LCAN coordinators attend annual orientation at the Iowa College Aid office.
- The Research in Higher Education journal publishes an article co-authored by Division Administrator Mark Wiederspan. The article examines an income-contingent student loan program in South Korea.
- AmeriCorps completes recruitment for the year with nine College Access Coaches and 28 Student Leaders at 30 high schools.
- Community Engagement Consultant Jamie Covell writes a blog for ACT about the College Application Campaign.
- Members of the Leadership Team and the Action Team of the Sioux City College Access Network are honored at the Northwest Iowa Area Education Agency appreciation lunch.
- The Iowa Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators honors Postsecondary Registration Administrator Carolyn Small (*right*) with the John Heisner Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award at its annual fall conference in Dubuque.



## NOVEMBER 2019

- Governor Kim Reynolds holds a news conference at Iowa College Aid, where she announces preliminary fall numbers for the Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship. The Governor also meets with staff (*right*) and thanks them for their hard work to implement Future Ready Iowa programs.
- More than 150 people attend Iowa College Aid's "Assessing the Future" conference at Des Moines Area Community College's Ankeny campus.
- Representatives of the Iowa Army National Guard visit Iowa College Aid to present certificates of appreciation to staff.



## DECEMBER 2019

- The first automated FAFSA report of the year goes out to public high schools.
- Iowa College Aid announces the selection of Dr. Mark Wiederspan as Executive Director.
- Iowa cracks the top 10 states for FAFSA filing rates.
- GEAR UP Iowa awards Year 7 College Partner Grants to nine colleges and universities in Iowa.

## JANUARY 2020

- The first messages go out through the Virtual College Coach texting program.
- Meghan Oster joins Iowa College Aid as a Statistical Research Analyst.
- Iowa College Aid distributes district dashboards to legislators, detailing high school graduation rate, FAFSA filing rate, average ACT score, college-going rate, educational level, median income, and participation in Iowa College Aid programs.
- The rate of Iowa public high schools opting in to automated FAFSA reports reaches 100 percent.
- Julie Ntem, Division Administrator for IT, Fiscal, and State Authorization, is elected president of the Iowa Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy.
- Governor Kim Reynolds touts the early success of the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship in her Condition of the State address.



- A reception at the Capitol honors retiring Executive Director Karen Misjak (*above, with past and current staff*).
- Jayne Smith joins the Postsecondary School Authorization team as a Compliance Officer.
- Community Engagement Consultants Elizabeth Yaddof and Keyli Keifer write a guest blog for ACT.
- Iowa College Aid receives a \$15,000 grant from State Higher Education Executive Officers to automate and streamline postsecondary school authorization.
- Community Engagement Consultant Jamie Covell is appointed to the Iowa ACT State Organization Board.

## **FEBRUARY 2020**

- GEAR UP Iowa staff and coaches attend the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships Capacity-Building Workshop in Orlando. GEAR UP Coordinator Karmon Long presents about how to include college and career readiness in the eighth-to-ninth-grade transition.
- Merima Dizdarevic is promoted to Executive Officer.
- Division Administrator Todd Brown presents to a joint Legislative subcommittee on Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations on health care loan repayment and forgiveness programs.
- Governor Kim Reynolds appoints Melissa Hidalgo to represent Iowa college students on the Iowa College Aid Board of Commissioners.

- Executive Director Mark Wiederspan and Commissioners Jeremy Varner and Cindy Winckler attend the Education Commission of the States’ “Connecting Education to Work” conference in North Carolina. Iowa is one of four states selected to participate and view Gallup survey data on public perception of higher education.
- Commissioner Melissa Hidalgo and Public Information Officer Elizabeth Keest Sedrel are panelists on U.S. Representative Cindy Axne’s student loan debt roundtable at Grand View University.
- Executive Director Mark Wiederspan and Commissioner Mark Putnam present to the Iowa House Appropriations Committee on trends in higher education enrollment.
- The Iowa School Counselor Association approves an ad hoc position for Iowa College Aid on its governing board. Jamie Covell, Community Engagement Consultant with Course to College, will serve a three-year term.
- University of Northern Iowa visits seven GEAR UP Iowa high schools in February and March.
- InSpirit Institute Inc., a massage school in Dubuque, closes abruptly. The State Authorization team travels to Dubuque to collect student records.

## **MARCH 2020**

- In a customer service survey of financial aid directors, Iowa College Aid receives an average rating of 4.68 out of 5, up from 4.33 in the previous survey in 2017.
- More than 80 GEAR UP Iowa seniors from Des Moines North, Hoover, East, and Lincoln high schools visit Des Moines Area Community College.
- College Decision Day registration opens.
- Gov. Kim Reynolds proclaims March as Latino Postsecondary Attainment Month in Iowa.
- Iowa’s K-12 schools close in response to COVID-19.
- Iowa College Aid closes its office.
- LCANs pause their grant application cycle.
- GEAR UP Iowa launches a virtual assistance platform in English and Spanish.
- Staff release a first round of guidance on program eligibility for students whose studies are affected by COVID-19.
- Iowa receives a \$3.5 million grant from the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program to help close equity and opportunity gaps in the state.
- The state FAFSA tracker (FAFSA.iowa.gov) expands to include completion rates for LCANs.
- In the early weeks of a national shift to teleworking, Tennessee, Minnesota, and Mississippi contact Iowa College Aid to learn about best practices for college access and success programs.
- Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy opens a special session for educators who need to complete work while schools are closed.
- Community Engagement Consultants Megan Sibbel and Jamie Covell present at the Iowa ACT Conference in Cedar Rapids on the Iowa College and Career Readiness Academy and Course to College. Community Engagement Consultant Liz Yaddof presents on the Virtual College Coach texting campaign.

## APRIL 2020

- Legislative leaders suspend the 2020 session.
- The Iowa Department of Education agrees to provide \$28,000 to expand the Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy.
- Iowa College Aid live streams a virtual FAFSA Day (*right*) in partnership with the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and the Iowa College Access Network. It draws more than 800 viewers in real time and more than 2,000 viewers overall.



- LCAN staff hold a virtual meeting with coordinators to discuss collective impact work during the pandemic.
- Program Planner Keyli Keifer presents on the College Success Coach program at the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees' monthly meeting of college presidents.
- Staff release a second and third round of guidance on program eligibility for students whose studies are affected by COVID-19.
- LCANs are allowed to repurpose funds to provide essentials for at-home learning.
- Iowa College Aid contacts 79 higher education institutions to explain the process for accessing the CARES Act Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.
- Gov. Kim Reynolds proclaims May as College Decision month and creates a congratulatory video for virtual College Decision Day celebrations.
- Course to College Registration opens for 2020-21.
- Staff work with the Iowa Department of Education to streamline the process of verifying employment for applicants of the Teach Iowa Scholar and Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness programs.
- GEAR UP Iowa offers schools the opportunity to request a “no-cost” three-month extension of their project performance period.

## MAY 2020

- Virtual College Decision Day events take place around the state.
- We release the “Condition of Higher Education in Iowa 2020” report.
- Staff cover 2,100 miles to deliver 12,000 color-changing cups to 46 schools.
- Education and Training Voucher coordinator Tristan Lynn meets with coordinators of similar programs across the country to discuss ways to assist former foster youth during the pandemic.
- GEAR UP Iowa hosts a virtual “Passing the Baton” conference to prepare for the closeout of Year 6 for the 2.0 cohort.
- The Virtual College Coach texting campaign surpasses 1,000 opt-ins.
- Community Engagement Consultants Anne Thomas and Megan Sibbel present at the virtual Collective Impact Convening, along with Nate Monson of Iowa Safe Schools/QSAT and Cecilia Martinez of Latinos CAN.
- Iowa College Aid releases a working paper analyzing educational and employment outcomes for recipients of the federal Education and Training Voucher for former foster youth.
- The Course to College AmeriCorps–College Access grant for 2020-21 is approved.
- Eastern Iowa Community Colleges, Des Moines Area Community College, Indian Hills Community College, and the University of Iowa hire GEAR UP Iowa Year 7 coordinators.
- The Postsecondary Authorization team begins accepting registration renewal fees electronically.
- An electronic residency form is released for colleges to use to determine residency for state scholarship/grant eligibility.

## JUNE 2020

- The Legislature reconvenes.
- Executive Director Mark Wiederspan writes an op-ed acknowledging the GEAR UP Iowa class of 2020. It runs in the Iowa Capital Dispatch, the Marshalltown Times-Republican, and The Storm Lake Times.
- Final loan repayment awards are issued under the Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program.
- The Capitalize on ICAPS information series, for financial aid administrators, begins.
- The Iowa State Fair Board votes to cancel the 2020 fair.
- The Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy launches its summer session with 55 participants.
- All 12 LCANs submit new grant applications.
- Gov. Kim Reynolds signs legislation creating the Rural Veterinarian Loan Repayment Program, expanding eligibility for the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, and allowing recipients of some repayment programs to refinance with private lenders and maintain eligibility.
- The first loan repayment awards (Health Care Loan Repayment Program) are generated and processed through ICAPS®.
- Iowa College Aid begins accepting payment certification from colleges and universities online.
- GEAR UP Iowa subgrants to partner high schools officially end (with the exception of a handful of no-cost extensions). GEAR UP Iowa College Partner Grants officially begin.

# FINANCIAL AID

**\$80M**

State appropriations

**8**

Scholarship and grant programs

**4**

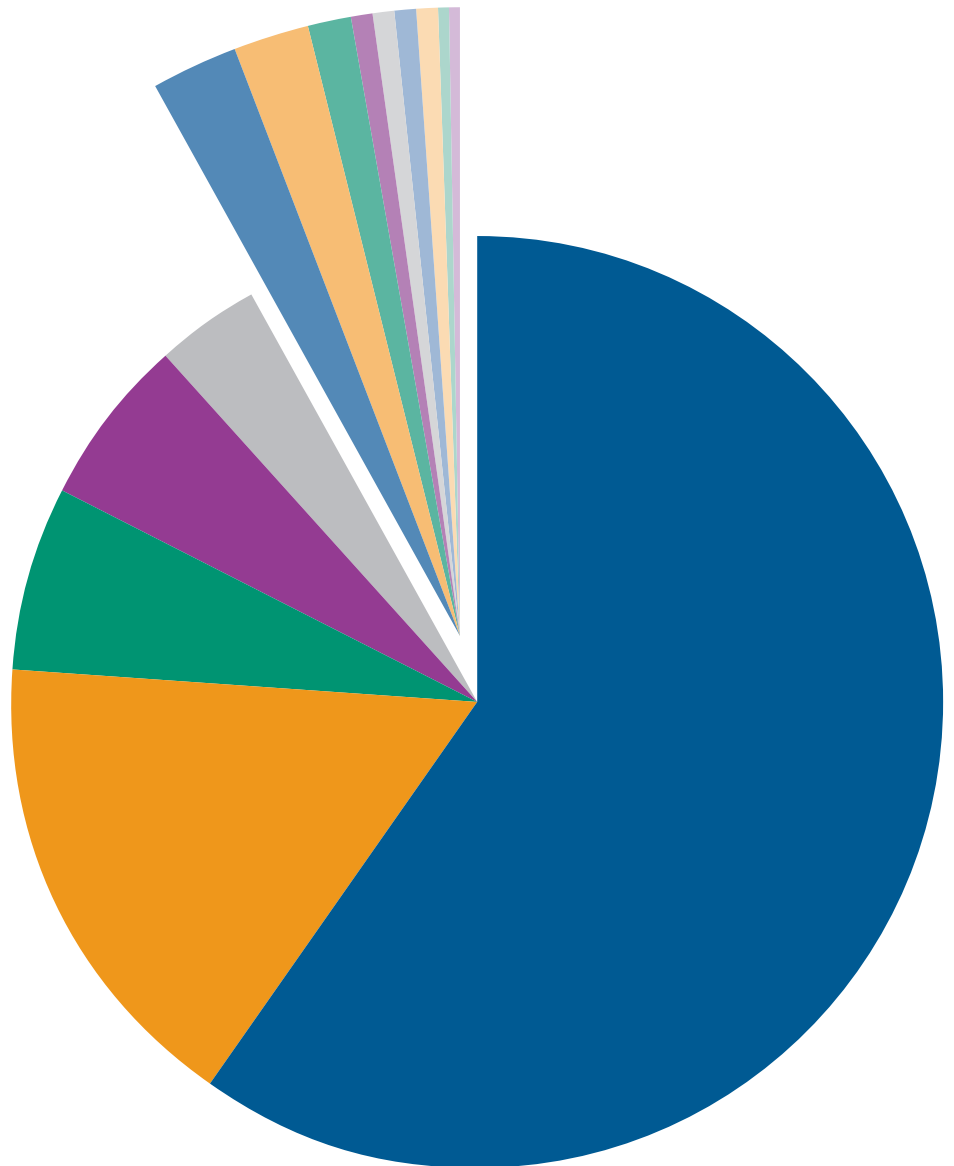
Loan forgiveness programs

**25K+**

Awards made in FY20

## FY 2020 state appropriations: \$79,619,620

- Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit  
\$47,703,463 | 59.9%
- Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship  
\$13,004,744 | 16.3%
- Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant (Kibbie Grant)  
\$5,000,000 | 6.3%
- Iowa National Guard Service Scholarship  
\$4,700,000 | 5.9%
- All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship  
\$3,000,000 | 3.8%
- Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant  
\$1,750,185 | 2.2%
- Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment  
\$1,424,502 | 1.8%
- Future Ready Iowa Grant  
\$1,000,000 | 1.3%
- Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit  
\$426,220 | .5%
- Health Professional Recruitment  
\$400,973 | .5%
- Teach Iowa Scholar  
\$400,000 | .5%
- Health Care Loan Repayment  
\$250,000 | .3%



<span style="color: #800080;">■</span> Administration—General \$429,279   .5%	<span style="color: #cccccc;">■</span> Administration—Last-Dollar Scholarship \$130,254   .2%
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## Scholarship & Grant Reserve Fund balance

Beginning balance for FY20: \$487,573.56

Ending balance: \$397,999.56

Iowa College Aid administers the Scholarship and Grant Reserve Fund authorized in Iowa Code Section 261.20 “to alleviate a current fiscal year shortfall in appropriations for scholarship or tuition grant programs that have the same nature as the programs for which the monies were originally appropriated.” The maximum balance is 1 percent of the funds appropriated to the Iowa Tuition Grant and Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant programs.

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“Thank you so much for choosing me all these years. This has **truly been life-changing!**”

—Jessica Graupmann, All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship



## State-funded scholarships and grants

### All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship:

Need-based assistance for students at risk of not pursuing higher education because of social and financial barriers.

### Future Ready Iowa Grant:

For Iowa residents returning to school for a bachelor’s degree in a high-demand program of study.

### Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship:

For Iowa residents working toward a certificate, diploma, or associate’s degree in a high-demand program of study.

### Iowa National Guard Service Scholarship:

For members of Iowa Air and Army National Guard units in undergraduate programs at Iowa colleges and universities.

### Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit:

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in undergraduate programs at Iowa’s for-profit private colleges and universities.

### Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit:

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in undergraduate programs at Iowa’s not-for-profit private colleges and universities.

### Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant:

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in career or technical programs of study at Iowa community colleges.

### Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition (Kibbie) Grant:

Need-based assistance for Iowa residents in high-demand career or technical programs of study at Iowa community colleges.

## State-funded loan forgiveness programs

### Health Care Loan Repayment:

For nurse educators teaching full-time at eligible Iowa colleges and universities, as well as registered nurses, advanced registered nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who practice in high-need communities.

### Health Professional Recruitment:

For Des Moines University graduates who practice in high-need communities.

### Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment:

For graduates of Des Moines University or the University of Iowa who practice in specified rural Iowa communities.

### Teach Iowa Scholar:

For highly qualified Iowa teachers who teach in designated shortage areas.

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## Other aid programs administered by Iowa College Aid

### Education & Training Voucher:

Federal program for students who are or were in foster care or who were adopted from foster care.

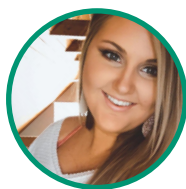
### Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship:

For students in GEAR UP Iowa (early graduates from the class of 2020 at partner schools).

### Governor Terry E. Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship:

For outstanding Iowa high school seniors who have strong academic and leadership credentials and have actively participated in the Iowa State Fair.

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“Without this scholarship, I would not be in the position to be **pursuing my dream** of becoming a registered nurse, as it has been my dream since I was a young child. I am very grateful for your support.”

—Shalee J. Fuller, Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship



### Governor’s news conference

Governor Kim Reynolds visited our office November 19, 2019, to announce Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship numbers and to thank staff for their efforts in ramping up Future Ready Iowa programs.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Initial appropriation</b>	<b>Total applicants</b>	<b>Unduplicated recipients</b>	<b>Total awards</b>	<b>Average award</b>	<b>Max award for FY20</b>
Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit	\$47,703,463	23,353	9,558	\$47,358,049	\$4,955	\$6,000
Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship	\$13,004,744	21,665	6,547	\$14,279,173	\$2,181	\$10,908
Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant	\$5,000,000	18,899	4,401	\$4,873,288	\$1,107	\$2,825
Iowa National Guard Service Scholarship	\$4,700,000	1,320	895	\$4,723,179	\$5,277	\$8,073
All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	\$3,000,000	5,237	788	\$3,253,619	\$4,129	\$4,644
Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant	\$1,750,185	18,899	2,672	\$1,759,272	\$658	\$900
Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment	\$1,424,502	9	9	\$1,798,425	\$199,825	\$200,000
Future Ready Iowa Grant	\$1,000,000	479	37	\$95,858	\$2,591	\$3,500
Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit	\$426,220	1,329	359	\$377,443	\$1,051	\$2,500
Health Professional Recruitment	\$400,973	16	14	\$570,000	\$40,714	\$50,000
Teach Iowa Scholar	\$400,000	146	102	\$408,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Health Care Loan Repayment	\$250,000	110	31	\$136,387	\$4,400	\$6,000
Iowa Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness*	\$0	31	30	\$80,794	\$2,693	\$7,927
Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship	N/A	267	85	\$58,824	\$692	\$1,200
Education & Training Voucher	\$581,217	422	159	\$581,217	\$3,655	\$5,000
Governor Terry E. Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship	N/A	98	4	\$14,000	\$3,500	\$5,000

\*Discontinued in 2017; final cohort received funding in FY20.

# COURSE TO COLLEGE

**152**

High schools participated

**52**

High schools opted to be Partner sites

**8K+**

College applications submitted

**342**

Public high schools received FAFSA reports

## Prepare, Apply, Finance, Decide, Go

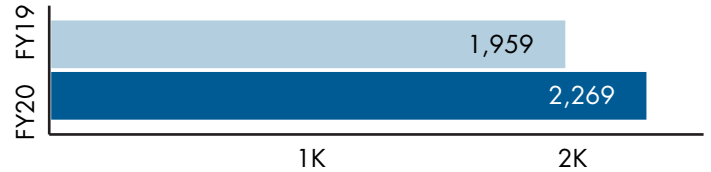
This program supports high schools in creating a college-going culture through five steps: Prepare, Apply, Finance, Decide, and Go. Schools choose from two levels of involvement: Participant and Partner. Partner sites commit to host events and to distribute student and coordinator surveys. This was the second year that we offered automated FAFSA completion reports—and the second year that all Iowa public high schools signed up to receive them. We continue to be the only state to provide this data to all public high schools. While the abrupt closure of schools in the spring due to COVID-19 made it difficult to track College Decision Day events, many of which were held virtually, we saw dramatic growth this year in other participation metrics (*right*).



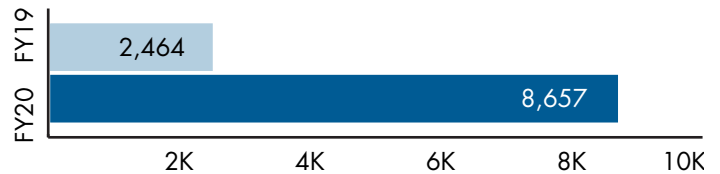
“Every year when we celebrate **College Decision Day** events, we talk about how important our new high school graduates are to Iowa’s future, and that has never been more true.”

—Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, addressing Iowa’s high school class of 2020 in a video for College Decision Day

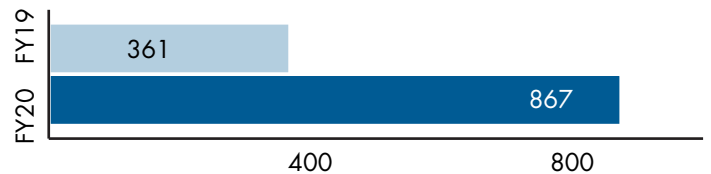
## HS seniors in college application events



## College applications submitted



## HS seniors completing year-end survey



## Operation cup giveaway

In May, Community Engagement staff loaded up our fleet of vehicles and covered 2,100 miles to deliver 12,000 color-changing “College Changes Everything” cups to 46 schools in 33 communities.

# COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS AMERICORPS

26

College Access  
host sites

3

College Success  
host sites

10K+

Member  
hours

740

Students  
reached

## Removing barriers to college

AmeriCorps members, placed by Iowa College Aid in high schools and community colleges, work to remove barriers to college access, success, and completion. They provide customized direct support to students, as well as capacity development for schools and colleges.

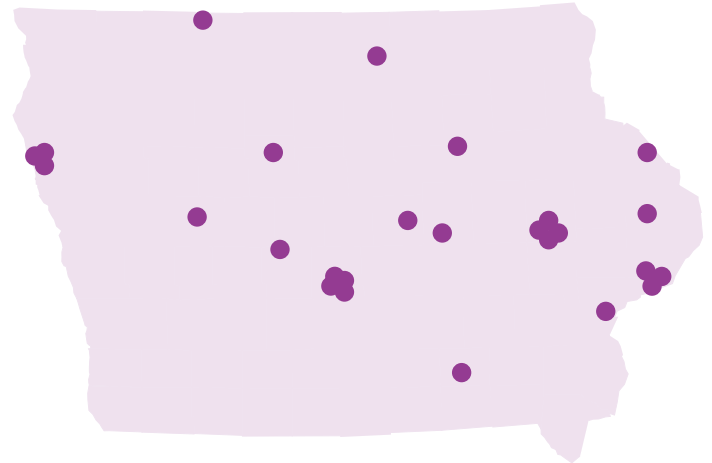
College Access Coaches follow Iowa College Aid's Course to College program to help high schools create a college-going culture by:

- Preparing students for college.
- Helping students apply to college.
- Ensuring students complete a FAFSA and research all finance options.
- Celebrating students' decisions about postsecondary education.

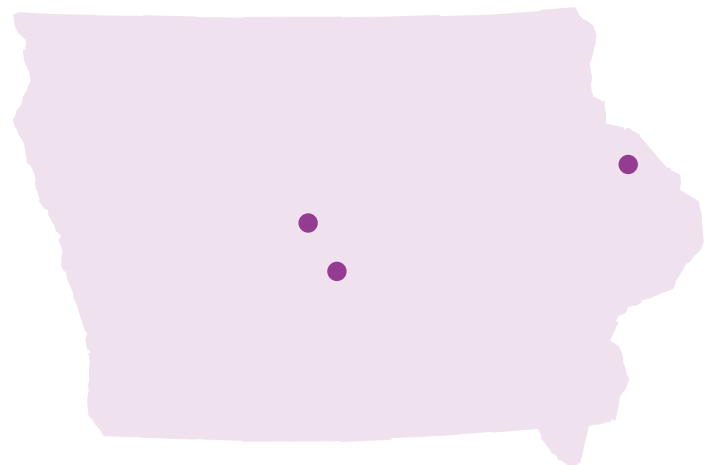
College Success Coaches support college students by:

- Promoting the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Future Ready Iowa Grant throughout Iowa and ensuring award recipients remain eligible.
- Assisting incoming students with the transition from high school graduation to their college campus.
- Providing individualized holistic college success services to current college students

## College Access



## College Success



“One of the most rewarding things in my position was being able to **connect with students** on a completely personal level. I took time to really listen about obstacles each student was facing.”

—Morgan Wollesen, College Access Coach in Carroll Region, 2019-20



# LOCAL COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORKS

17

Applications received

13

Communities funded

\$600K+

Awarded in grants

## Collective Impact to raise attainment

Local College Access Networks (LCANs) work in communities to raise college attainment. Iowa College Aid provides funding, training, and technical assistance to align the efforts of the education, government, business, and nonprofit sectors—a model known as Collective Impact. The total awarded in FY20 was \$604,653. Of the 13 LCANs funded, 10 are centered on a geographic area, while three are specific to a statewide student demographic.

## LCAN goals (Number with that goal in parentheses)

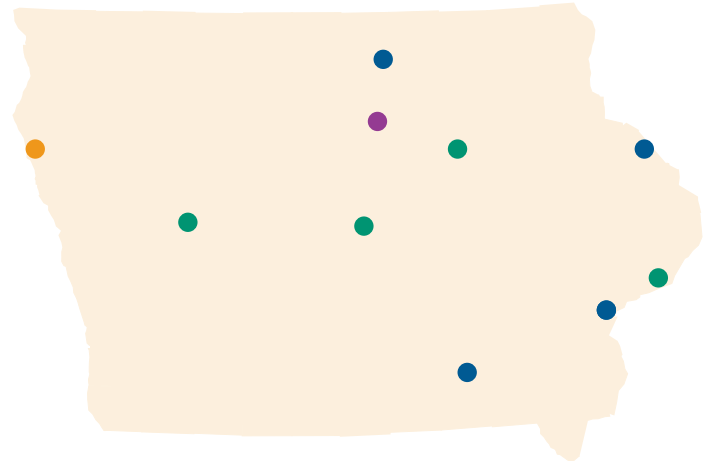
- FAFSA completion (5)
- College enrollment (5)
- Reduce gaps (4)
- Adult learners (3)
- College/career readiness (3)
- College-going culture (3)
- HS completion (2)
- College completion (2)
- College intentions (2)
- Increased engagement (2)
- Advocacy tools (1)
- Career pathways (1)



“Our partners collaborate to **reduce barriers** to postsecondary success such as affordability, access, persistence, and attainment.”

—Donna Loewen, Ph.D.,  
Dubuque College Access  
Network Coordinator

## LCAN communities



### YEAR I

- Black Hawk County CAN
- Carroll Area CAN
- Latinos CAN\*
- OPT-in CAN for System Involved Youth\*
- Quad Cities CAN
- Queer Supports Advisory Team (QSAT)\*
- Story County CAN

### YEAR II

- Aligned Impact Muscatine (AIM)
- Dubuque CAN
- Mason City CAN
- Ottumwa Cradle-College-Career (C3)

### YEAR III

- Mission Possible: Franklin County

### IMPLEMENTATION

- Sioux City CAN (previous model grant completed midway through fiscal year)

\*Statewide

# IOWA COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS ACADEMY

189

Enrolled  
in courses

10

Professional  
certificates awarded

7

Specialist certificates  
awarded

13

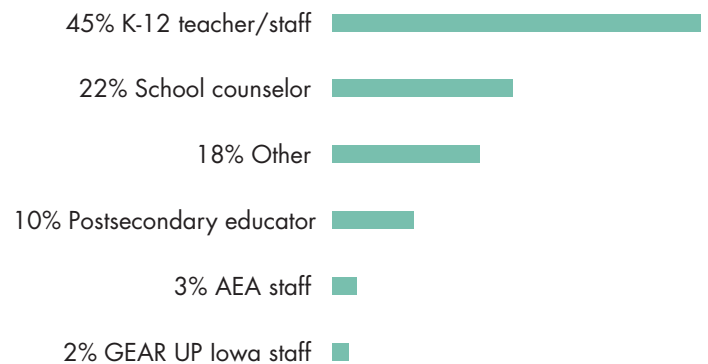
Badges  
awarded

## Continuing ed for college access professionals

This suite of six Iowa-specific online courses helps college access and success professionals provide equitable postsecondary opportunities for all students. Participants who complete the first three courses are certified as College Access Professionals; those who complete five courses are certified as College Access Specialists. In FY20, we added an advanced course in equity issues; participants who complete that course in addition to the first five earn an Equity badge. In FY20, 189 people from 86 school districts, community colleges, colleges/universities, and Iowa AEAs enrolled in these courses.



## Participants' job categories



## Course facilitators

- Sue Schirmer, Heartland AEA Professional Learning and Leadership Consultant
- David Ford, Mississippi Bend AEA Focus Area Consultant
- Gena Gesing, Northeast Iowa Community College Director of Career Services
- Meredith Dohmen, Bright Foundation Director of Scholarships
- Mark Shea, Prairie Lakes AEA Postsecondary Success Lead

"The Academy increased my understanding of resources and programs available to **help our kids be more successful** in their planning and futures. I had the opportunity to learn important content and network with many professionals in my field."

—Julie Chapuis, school counselor, Van Buren County School District, College Access Specialist



## 6K+

Students in cohort  
in FY20

## 25

High school  
partners

## 12

Low-income  
school districts

## 4K+

Students received some  
form of service

### Cohort's final year of high school

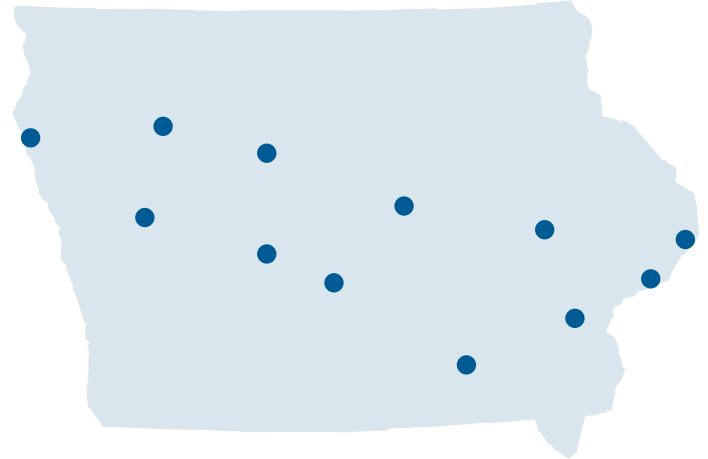
This dollar-for-dollar matched federal grant partnered with 25 high schools in 12 low-income school districts beginning in 2014 to help underserved students complete high school and succeed in college. The cohort was in seventh grade then; this year, 6,295 GEAR UP students were about two months away from high school graduation when COVID-19 forced the closure of their school buildings. While students and families grappled with the sudden loss of person-to-person instruction and counseling, GEAR UP staff quickly implemented a web-based platform to continue to guide them on their postsecondary pathways. We transferred all our services to a virtual environment, including FAFSA completion and virtual coaching. By year-end, 4,400 students had participated in at least one service.



"I went on a lot of college visits trying to **explore my options**. And I did the ACT for free. ... My parents didn't go to high school in America, so they didn't know a lot of this stuff. GEAR UP really helped inform us."

—Antonio Chavez, Davenport West High School

### GEAR UP districts



- Cedar Rapids
- Clinton
- Columbus Junction
- Davenport
- Denison
- Des Moines
- Fort Dodge
- Marshalltown
- Ottumwa
- Perry
- Sioux City
- Storm Lake

### FAFSA completion among GEAR UP students

- 1,800 GEAR UP Iowa students received 3,050 hours of FAFSA support in FY20.
- 51 percent of GEAR UP Iowa students completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.
- The FAFSA completion rate for GEAR UP Iowa seniors was 8.9 percent higher than the rate at those schools the year before.

NOTE: FAFSA numbers are as of June 30, 2020, but are not final as students continued to file into FY21.



# VIRTUAL COLLEGE COACH

**907**

Students  
opted in



**19K**

Text messages  
sent



**2,768**

Text messages  
received

## Exceeding expectations after only 6 months

The Virtual College Coach, for college-bound students and new college students, launched in January 2020. This texting initiative particularly targets prospective and current Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship and Future Ready Iowa Grant recipients but is available to all students in Iowa. Students who opt in receive timely text reminders and advice, as well as the opportunity to connect with a real live coach. Text messages reach students on a platform they are likely to use, and research shows that text “nudges” combined with direct support are especially helpful to underserved student populations. While it was only active for six months out of FY20, the Virtual College Coach has already exceeded expectations. For instance, the first message, sent January 2, simply introduced the program and was not meant to generate responses—but the engagement rate was an unexpected 20 percent, with most of the responses involving questions about financial aid. Plans for the coming year are to expand the service to include more populations, including high school juniors and their families.

## Breakdown by program as of June 30, 2020

	Future Ready Iowa	GEAR UP Iowa	College Access
Opt-ins	601*	170	313**
Messages sent	12,023	4,448	2,914
Messages received	1,510	810	448
Engagement rate	58.3%	65.3%	28.1%**

\* Of these, 519 were recipients of the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship.

\*\* Of these, 136 were high school seniors or family members. Texts in FY20 were sent only to these 136, which skews the engagement rate lower. Texts in FY21 will include younger students and families.

“Thank you! My first, so we can use all the **guidance and advice** we can get.”

—Robin Sitzmann, parent of a high school senior



# POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL AUTHORIZATION

285

Schools registered/  
authorized

229

Based in  
Iowa

56

Based out  
of state

27

Student dispute  
cases vetted

## Program oversight and consumer protection

Iowa College Aid is the state agency that authorizes postsecondary schools to operate in Iowa and to offer postsecondary education programs to Iowans, whether from a physical location in Iowa or via distance education. The Postsecondary School Authorization team also ensures that students receive the consumer and financial protections afforded under Iowa law. We accept questions and complaints from any student attending an Iowa postsecondary school and from Iowa residents attending any postsecondary school in the United States.

The team monitors schools under its oversight and takes action, when possible, to close Iowa enrollment when a school is in danger of closing. When Iowa students are displaced by a sudden closure, the team provides advice about options for debt relief or transfer.

The team also helped inform schools about their options resulting from the extraordinary circumstances brought on by COVID-19. In early April 2020, we provided schools with information and resources regarding COVID-19 and surveyed their plans for changes to academic operations. The team also informed Iowa schools about their CARES Act allocations and how to access these grant funds for students.

## State requirements

To offer postsecondary instruction in Iowa, a school must be one of the following:

- Registered in Iowa
- Approved for an exemption from registration
- Covered by the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

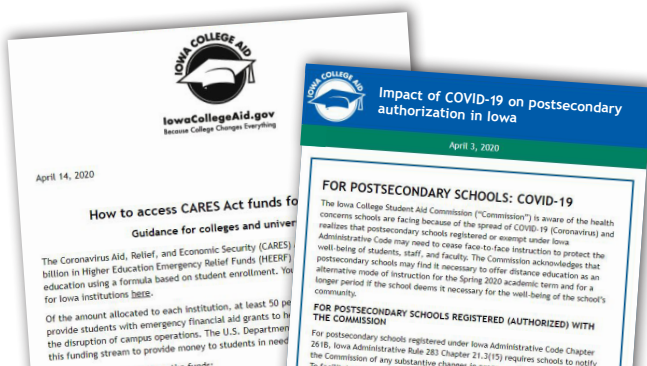
In addition, some schools might be required to demonstrate one or more of the following:

- Financial responsibility including a surety bond payable to the state of Iowa
- Compliance with Iowa's tuition refund policy for students who withdraw
- Disclosures to students about total program cost, estimated fees for licensure exams or licenses, and the rate of students who complete the program

## Covered schools

Postsecondary schools that fall under Iowa College Aid's authority include:

- Degree-granting colleges and universities
- Nondegree-granting colleges and universities
- Other types of schools and education providers such as:
  - Driver education schools
  - Real estate and appraisal educators
  - Private nondegree-granting allied health schools
  - Cosmetology, barbering, and massage therapy schools
  - Schools of religious study
  - Other nondegree-granting vocational schools



# RESEARCH

43%

Share of Iowans with a college degree in 2017

7%

Decline in college enrollment, 2010-18

21.6

Average ACT score, tied for highest in nation

\$5K+

Average student loan debt per capita in Iowa

## Trusted source of data

In addition to continuous evaluation of Iowa College Aid programs, our Research team provides analytics and insight for higher education stakeholders, the media, and the general public. In January, for the first time, we provided every Iowa legislator with an individual dashboard detailing high school graduation rate, FAFSA filing rate, average ACT score, college-going rate, educational level, median income, and participation in Iowa College programs for their House or Senate district. Much of our research can be found on our Higher Education Data Center ([IowaCollegeAid.gov/DataCenter](http://IowaCollegeAid.gov/DataCenter)).



## Research conference

More than 150 people attended our “Assessing the Future” conference on college readiness, access, and affordability on November 20, 2019. We heard from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, ACT, the Education Commission of the States, college presidents, Iowa legislators, and representatives of the Board of Regents and community colleges. Slideshows of most presentations are available at [IowaCollegeAid.gov/Future](http://IowaCollegeAid.gov/Future).

## Research publications

- “FAFSA Filing in Iowa,” July 2019
- “Typical Full-Time Undergraduate Student Expenses at Colleges and Universities in Iowa/Academic Year 2019-20,” August 2019
- “2019 Enrollment Report,” December 2019
- “Kibbie Grant/Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant Program Report FY 2019,” December 2019
- “Home Base Iowa Postsecondary Education Reporting,” January 2020
- “Student & Faculty Diversity Report,” March 2020
- “Educational and Employment Outcomes for the Education and Training Voucher Program” (working paper), May 2020
- “Condition of Higher Education in Iowa 2020,” May 2020 (*excerpts above*)

“I’m really impressed with the work of @IACollegeAid. Appreciate their commitment to **using data and research** to improve outcomes in IA.”

—Tweet from Dr. David Tandberg, SHEEO, conference keynote



# COMMUNICATIONS

**146K**

Visits to website

**3K**

Followers on social media

**109K**

Free publications given away

**28K**

Digital newsletter subscriptions

## Daily, weekly, and annual outreach

Through digital and print media, Iowa College Aid puts information in the hands of college-bound students and their families. We maintain websites and social media accounts for both the agency and the GEAR UP Iowa program. We reach followers daily through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and weekly through our e-newsletters. We also produce annual publications in English and Spanish to help students and families navigate the process of applying for college and financial aid. In FY20, visits to our agency website more than doubled over the year before, following a redesign late in FY19. Distribution of our publications also more than doubled, driven largely by a new flier promoting the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship. Our social media following and newsletter subscriptions grew over the previous year by 24 percent and 5 percent, respectively. We issued nine news releases in FY20 and were mentioned in Iowa news outlets 73 times.

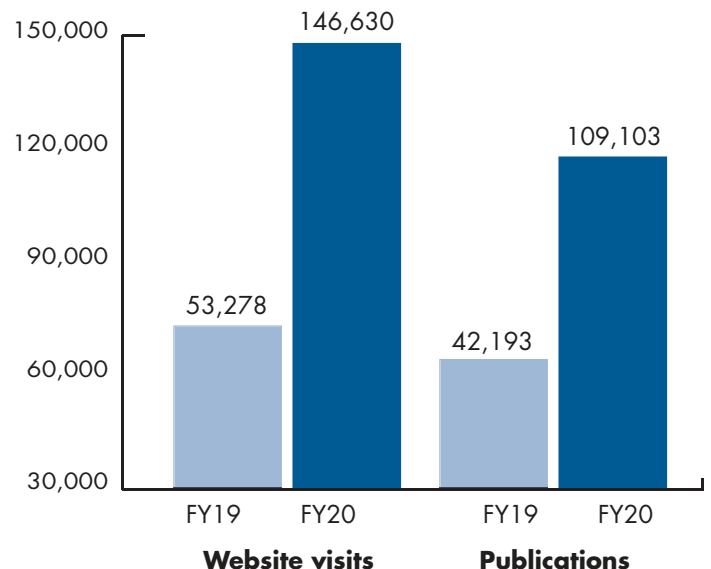


## Iowa State Fair

More than 10,000 visitors to our booth in the Varied Industries Building August 8–18, 2019, took an informal poll about how college might change their lives and received color-changing cups and color-changing pencils.



## Year-over-year metrics



# FINAL FY20 OPERATING EXPENSES

	STATE APPROPRIATED PROGRAMS	STATE MANDATED/ UNFUNDED PROGRAMS*	POSTSECONDARY REGISTRATION	FEDERAL GRANT/ PROGRAMS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	FFELP/PLP COLLECTIONS, ASCENDIUM**	TOTALS
FY2020 number of programs	12	5	1	4	3	2	27
FY2020 fed award (admin)/ others				4,475,429			4,475,429
Federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund	5,100,000						5,100,000
FY2020 state appropriation/grant (scholarship)	79,547,660						79,547,660
FY2020 state admin/fees/others	559,534		256,920	172,115	14,000	4,212,471	5,215,040
Personnel	759,960	191,949	481,831	1,555,176	908,819	19,587	3,917,321
Travel	14,754	3,727	9,354	30,193	17,644	380	76,052
Supplies, printing, postage & equip repair	23,397	5,909	14,834	47,879	27,980	603	120,602
Rent communication & prof/outside serv.	84,290	21,290	53,441	172,490	100,800	2,172	434,483
State legal, audit, state reimbursements	49,037	12,386	31,090	100,348	58,642	1,264	252,766
Advertising & publicity	5,033	1,271	3,191	10,300	6,019	130	25,944
State transfer/reimbursements/IT exp	136,785	34,549	86,725	279,916	163,578	3,525	705,079
<b>Total operating cost</b>	<b>1,073,256</b>	<b>271,080</b>	<b>680,466</b>	<b>2,196,302</b>	<b>1,283,481</b>	<b>27,661</b>	<b>5,532,246</b>
Aid to individuals				581,217			581,217
Transfer to scholarship trust				1,603,175			1,603,175
Grants to K-12 schools/communities (sub grants)				1,082,980	529,854		1,612,834
Scholarships/grants	77,131,085	14,000		58,824			77,203,909
Total expenditures (incl. scholarship)	78,204,341	285,080	680,466	5,522,497	1,813,335	27,661	86,533,380
Fund committed for scholarship and aid	7,805,677						7,805,677
<b>Net gain/loss</b>	<b>(513,722)</b>	<b>(271,080)</b>	<b>(246,777)</b>	<b>(1,209,270)</b>	<b>(1,799,335)</b>	<b>4,184,809</b>	<b>144,626</b>
<b>Overall % total expense</b>	<b>90.37%</b>	<b>0.33%</b>	<b>0.79%</b>	<b>6.38%</b>	<b>2.10%</b>	<b>0.03%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

\*Related to Chapter 261 of Iowa Code—Branstad State Fair Scholarship, loan programs  
 \*\*Great Lakes Higher Education Corp. & Affiliates changed its name to Ascendium Education Group on November 15, 2018



**Because College Changes Everything**

**IOWA COLLEGE AID**

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