



ANNUAL REPORT **FY21**



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

This past year our staff continued to demonstrate unparalleled creativity and innovation in pursuing our mission.

The effects of COVID-19 and the global pandemic have forced Iowa College Aid and our partners to remain agile and adaptable. With the return of in-person learning, our Community Engagement staff was able to, again, personally encourage and connect with Iowans who are exploring and pursuing their postsecondary education goals. At the same time, staff applied and expanded upon the lessons learned during 2020 to use technology and the virtual delivery of our programming to reach an even wider audience of Iowans.

Technology upgrades and our staff's continued flexibility promise to continue the trend of reaching Iowans wherever they are, whether it be in a physical classroom, learning virtually, or on their phones. We are confident these efforts will keep Iowa's FAFSA filing rates and Course To College participation on an upward trajectory.

Our 13 scholarship, grant, and loan repayment programs helped distribute nearly \$80 million to almost 30,000 Iowans seeking postsecondary education. One of those programs, the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship, remained a tremendous success in its second year. We're excited to help Iowans reach their career goals in high-demand fields through the Last-Dollar Scholarship as we continue to develop Iowa's workforce to meet the state's needs for tomorrow and beyond.

This report captures the critical work of our agency as we continue to help all Iowans achieve postsecondary education. It also serves as an important touchstone for the work ahead and the foundation we are eager to build upon in the current year.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Wiederspan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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

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.

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

FY21 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Manny Atwood



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

Ms. Melissa Hidalgo



Represents Iowa college
students*

Mr. Doug Shull, Vice Chair



Represents general
public*

Ms. Sherry Bates



Regent, State Board
of Regents
Represents State Board
of Regents

Dr. Kathleen Mulholland, Chair



Represents general
public*

Ms. Barbara Sloniker



Represents parents of
Iowa students*

Sen. Chris Cournoyer



Represents Iowa
Senate**

Dr. Terry Murrell



President,
Western Iowa Tech
Represents community
colleges*

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

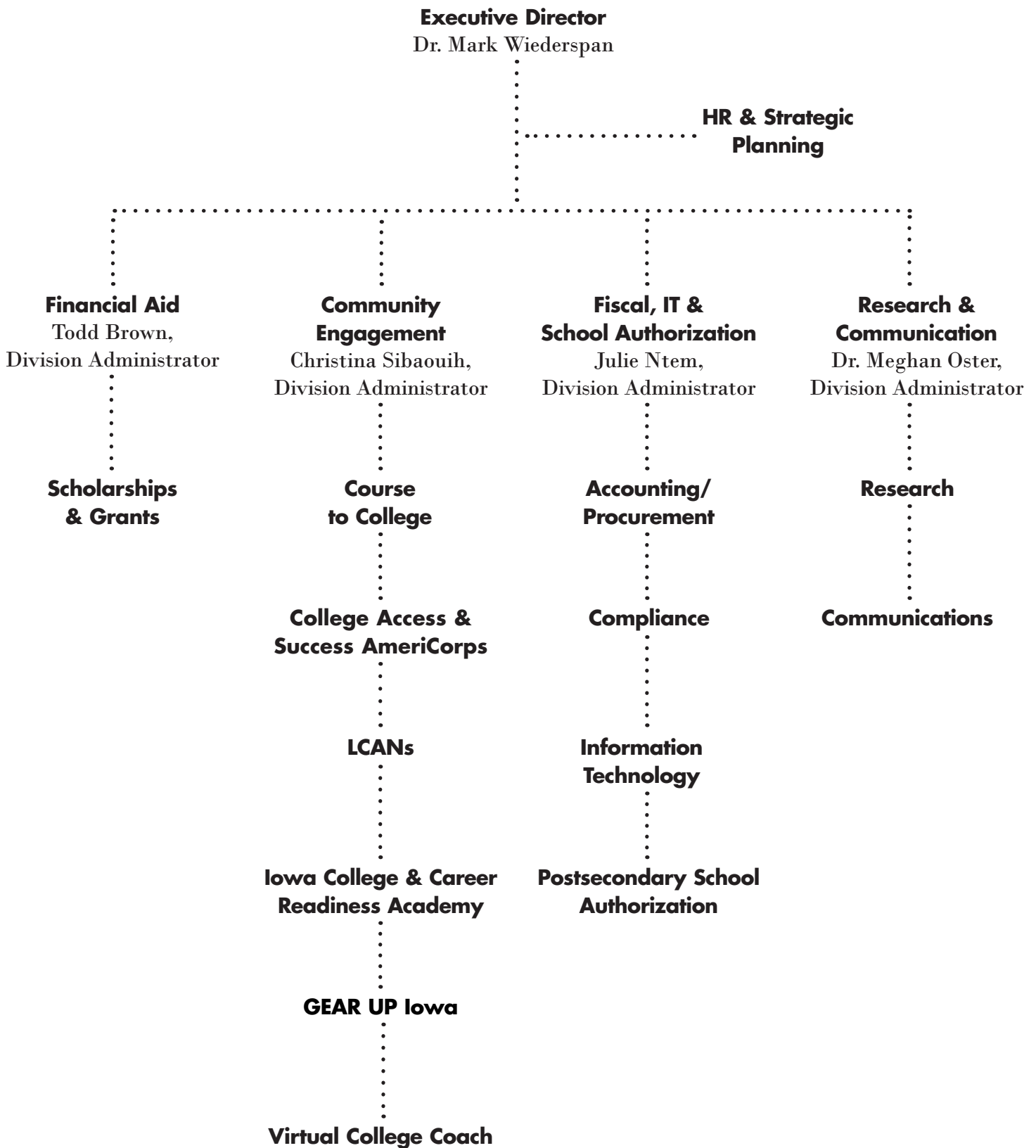


Represents Iowa
House**

*Appointed by the Governor

**Ex officio (nonvoting)

DIVISIONS & TEAMS



FY21 IN REVIEW

JULY 2020

- We award \$599,850 for the 2020-21 LCAN grant cycle. All 12 existing networks receive full funding.
- Governor Kim Reynolds approves the transfer of \$5.1 million in funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship.
- The American College Application Campaign names South Tama County High School, a participant in our Course to College program, as Iowa's 2019 School of Excellence.
- Staff begin meeting with legislators on the House and Senate Education committees to outline plans for the next session.
- GEAR UP Iowa begins collaboration calls with Year 7 college partners.

AUGUST 2020

- The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators releases a series of papers on simplifying the financial aid process, including one co-authored by Executive Director Mark Wiederspan and Research Analyst Meghan Oster.
- GEAR UP Iowa Facilitator Nathan Svare and Community Engagement Consultants Elizabeth Yaddof and Jamie Covell co-author a #FAFSABrightSpots blog.
- A reception at the State Historical Building honors three recipients of the Governor Terry E. Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship.
- GEAR UP Iowa Coordinator Karmon Long and Facilitator Erin Valerio-Garsow present at the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships' Summer School.
- The GEAR UP 2.0 cohort enters the first year of postsecondary education.



SEPTEMBER 2020

- GEAR UP Week honors our students and partner colleges.
- Des Moines Roosevelt, Columbus Junction, and Sioux City West high schools win the GEAR UP Iowa FAFSA Completion Challenge.
- We hold a virtual College Application Week with 21 informational sessions for high school students.



OCTOBER 2020

- The 2021-22 FAFSA cycle opens, and undergraduate filers in Iowa begin receiving automated emails introducing them to Iowa College Aid programs and services. In the first 72 hours, more than 70 students opt in to our Virtual College Coach texting program.
- GEAR UP Iowa is selected to receive \$232,740 in supplemental funding to evaluate postsecondary outcomes of the 2.0 cohort through 2025.
- A new year begins for AmeriCorps College Access and Success, with 22 members eventually joining the team.
- We held our annual LCAN Convening, “Moving Forward Together,” with about 40 virtual participants.
- Initial reports show a 16.7 increase in the number of Iowans who received the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship compared to fall 2019.
- GEAR UP Iowa College Partners report that nearly 1,500 of their students have been awarded the Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship.
- AmeriCorps program staff participate in the official 2020 AmeriCorps Staff Launch hosted by Volunteer Iowa.
- In an effort to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on college enrollment decisions, we send a survey to nearly 128,000 Iowans. In the first five minutes, we receive more than 2,000 responses.
- GEAR UP Iowa launches a series of virtual forums for students.

NOVEMBER 2020

- The Scholarships and Grants team completes its risk assessment for 2020-21 and determines that we will audit 17 colleges.
- After an overwhelming response to the two-day application fair during College Application Week in September, we hold a second, longer application fair.
- GEAR UP Iowa Facilitator Graci Zeiger and Community Engagement Consultants Jamie Covell and Megan Sibbel present, through prerecorded videos, at the Iowa School Counselor Association’s annual conference.
- We co-host a live Facebook event, “FAFSA Step by Step,” with the Iowa College Access Network.
- College and Career Readiness Academy registrations are up 50 percent from a year earlier.
- The Virtual College Coach begins offering one-on-one appointments.
- We produced a video of FAFSA tips for immigrant students for DREAM Iowa’s annual Youth Leadership Summit.

DECEMBER 2020

- We hold a higher education orientation for legislators, in partnership with the Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Iowa Board of Regents, and the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees. It draws 48 attendees.
- Final reports show a 17 percent increase in the number of Iowans who received the Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship this fall over the previous year.
- The number of GEAR UP Iowa students who have claimed the Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship grows to 2,944.

JANUARY 2021

- We begin a series of internal training sessions about the roles of Iowa College Aid’s various teams.
- Iowa College Aid partners with the Iowa Department of Education and the AEA Postsecondary Readiness and Equity Partnership (PREP) to offer College and Career Transition Counselor (CCTC) positions for community colleges and school districts in Iowa. The first informational webinar draws more than 170 people.
- Our Request for Proposals opens for school districts interested in GEAR UP 3.0.
- The LCAN team holds a “Framework for the Future” webinar for Iowa College Aid partners, LCAN community members and leaders, anyone interested in forming an LCAN, and anyone interested in learning how they can help increase college attainment in Iowa. It draws 35 attendees.
- We released a research report titled “College Dreams Dissolved: An Examination of Factors Tied to ‘Summer Melt’ in Iowa” that examines the relationship among filing the FAFSA and taking the ACT and college enrollment of college-intending students.

FEBRUARY 2021

- During a routine review of a change of ownership application, the Postsecondary School Authorization team discovers that 140 Iowa students are owed more than \$24,000 from an out-of-state, for-profit school that was no longer following the Iowa Tuition Refund Policy.
- GEAR UP Iowa staff and partner college coaches take part in the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships’ virtual Capacity-Building Workshop.
- A second webinar about the new CCTC Partnership draws 66 people.
- The Postsecondary Authorization Team reports an uptick in student complaints so far this fiscal year. With more than four months remaining in FY 2021, the team has resolved 22 complaints, and five more are pending, compared to 27 complaints in all of FY 2020.
- The Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk publishes an article assessing GEAR UP Iowa’s impact on college readiness. Researchers from Iowa College Aid and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships compare GEAR UP Iowa 2.0 students to a non-GEAR UP peer group and find that GEAR UP students had higher high school attendance rates and higher standardized test scores.
- The Local College Access Network team holds a virtual workshop for communities interested in submitting Year 1 applications for FY 2022.

MARCH 2021

- We released our annual Student and Faculty Diversity Report, showing that 38,998 minority students were enrolled at Iowa colleges and universities in fall 2020, representing 18.9 percent of enrollment.
- Governor Kim Reynolds signs a bill allowing recipients of the All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship to temporarily suspend their studies under certain circumstances.
- The Iowa College & Career Readiness Academy launches a new course focused on early awareness strategies for elementary students.
- We mark one year of working remotely.
- Applications close for school district partners in a potential GEAR UP Iowa 3.0. We receive 14 eligible applications.
- The Local College Access Network team holds two webinars for communities interested in applying for Year I grants in FY 2022. The first provides an overview and draws 35 attendees. The second focuses on the application process and draws 11 attendees.
- Governor Kim Reynolds signs our agency bill authorizing the formation of a nonprofit arm.
- Executive Director Mark Wiederspan serves on a panel at Iowa Ideas' In-Depth Week on Higher Education.
- Six community college-school district partnerships are selected to receive grants to fund College and Career Transition Counselors.

APRIL 2021

- We launch a series of weekly “How I Decided” webinars to help high school students understand the college and career pathways open to them.
- We begin a series of convenings with individual Area Education Agencies on strategies to raise FAFSA completion rates in Iowa.
- The U.S. Department of Education announces that it will expand the pause on federal student loan collections and interest to include all defaulted loans in the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP).
- Registration opens for Course to College 2021-22. For the second year in a row, North Polk High School is the first to sign up. In less than a week, 13 schools register.
- Des Moines Area Community College, in collaboration with other GEAR UP Iowa college partners, holds a conference to promote self-reflection and improvement during the pandemic. It draws 60 GEAR UP students.

MAY 2021

- We begin accepting new Local College Access Network grant proposals for fiscal year 2022.
- We celebrate high school seniors' college decisions with a week of virtual pep rallies.
- Governor Kim Reynolds signs a bill allowing the transfer of funds from discontinued programs to Teach Iowa Scholar.
- We wrap up our first round of FAFSA convenings, with more than 120 school counselors attending.
- The Community Engagement team presents at a National College Attainment Network webinar titled “Building an Ecosystems Approach to College Attainment (& Sustaining the Model During Challenging Times).”
- College Access AmeriCorps fills all 24 Student Leader slots for fall 2021.
- 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 2021

- Governor Kim Reynolds signs a bill increasing funds for Iowa College Aid programs by 13.5 percent over FY21.
- The Governor also signs a bill expanding student consumer protections in Iowa.
- College Access and Success AmeriCorps starts 13 new FAFSA associates in partnership with the Iowa College Access Network.
- We hold a FAFSA convening for statewide higher education stakeholders.
- We submit our GEAR UP Iowa 3.0 application. It requests \$26,802,976 over seven years for a program in 13 school districts.
- Iowa College and Career Readiness Academy receives approval for a new 602 course: Supporting College & Career Readiness for Systems-Involved Students.
- After reviewing 13 applications for Local College Access Network grants for FY22, we select 12 to fund.

FINANCIAL AID

\$80M

State appropriations

8

Scholarship and grant programs

5

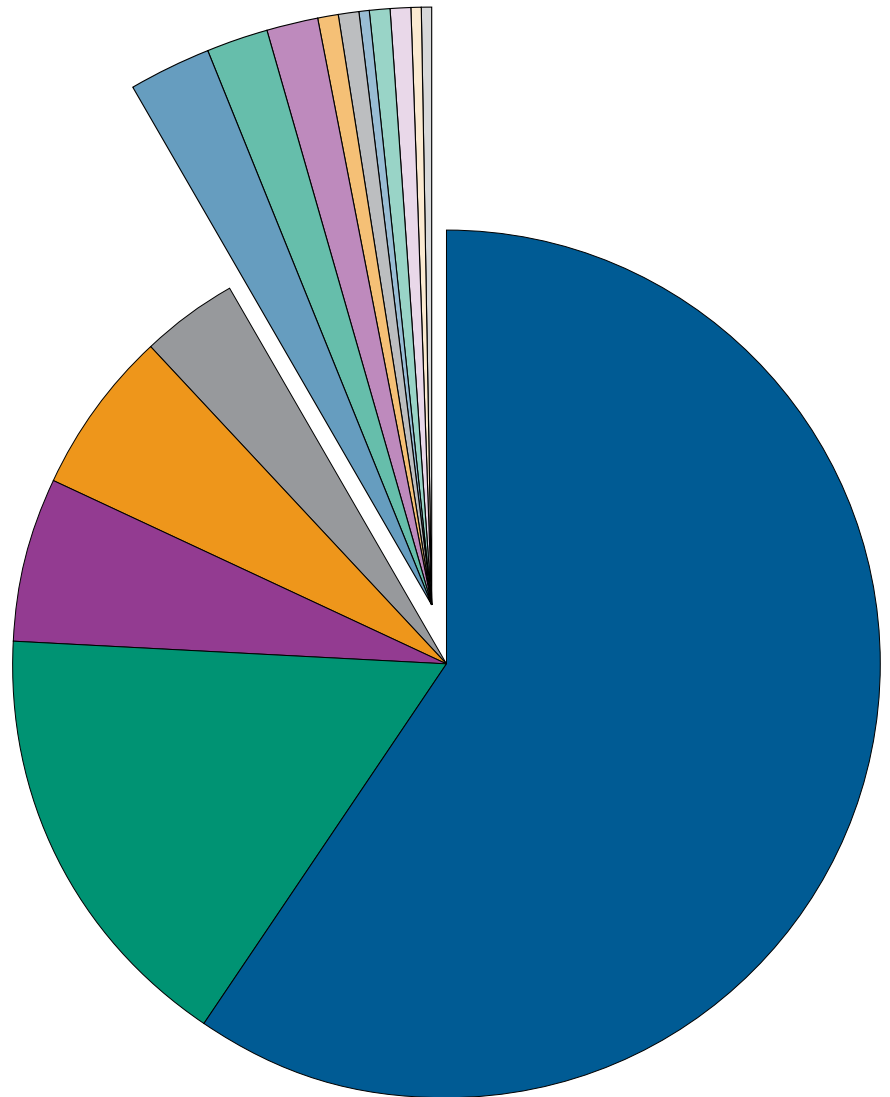
Loan forgiveness programs

29K+

Awards made in FY21

FY 2021 state appropriations: \$79,951,620

- Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit
\$47,703,463 | 59.7%
- Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship
\$13,004,744 | 16.3%
- Skilled Workforce Shortage 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 | 0.5%
- Health Care Professional Recruitment (DMU)
\$400,973 | 0.5%
- Teach Iowa Scholar
\$400,000 | 0.5%
- Rural Iowa Veterinarian Loan Repayment
\$300,000 | 0.4%
- Health Care Loan Repayment
\$250,000 | 0.3%



■ Administration—General \$429,279 0.5%	■ Administration—Last-Dollar Scholarship \$162,254 0.2%
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Scholarship & Grant Reserve Fund balance

Beginning balance for FY21: \$898,627.56

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 2 percent of the funds appropriated to the Iowa Tuition Grant and Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant programs.

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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 repayment 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.

Rural Iowa Veterinarian Loan Repayment:

For veterinarians in their final year of a doctor of veterinary medicine program or those who have graduated in the last five years and are practicing in specified rural locations.

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 that participated in GEAR UP Iowa 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.



“The Last Dollar Scholarship helped me get over another obstacle that would have been in the way of me achieving a goal that has been my dream ever since I can remember, receiving a college degree.”

—April Torrance, Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship

Program	Initial appropriation	Total applicants	Unduplicated recipients	Total awards	Average award	Max award for FY21
Iowa Tuition Grant Not-for-Profit	\$47,703,463	22,940	9,291	\$47,277,256	\$5,089	\$6,200
Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarship	\$13,004,744	22,575	7,864	\$19,711,666	\$2,507	N/A
Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant	\$5,000,000	19,791	4,325	\$4,628,594	\$1,070	\$2,920
Iowa National Guard Service Scholarship	\$4,700,000	1,258	843	\$4,550,619	\$5,398	\$9,274
All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship	\$3,000,000	6,519	798	\$3,209,985	\$4,023	\$4,644
Iowa Vocational-Technical Tuition Grant	\$1,750,185	19,791	2,548	\$1,625,167	\$638	\$900
Rural Iowa Primary Care Loan Repayment	\$1,424,502	13	13	\$2,509,797	\$193,061	\$200,000
Future Ready Iowa Grant	\$1,000,000	1,270	49	\$176,562	\$3,603	\$5,000
Iowa Tuition Grant For-Profit	\$426,220	1,237	363	\$442,197	\$1,218	\$3,000
Health Professional Recruitment	\$400,973	13	13	\$528,000	\$40,615	\$50,000
Teach Iowa Scholar	\$400,000	149	64	\$256,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Rural Iowa Veterinarian Loan Repayment	\$300,000	41	5	\$300,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Health Care Loan Repayment	\$250,000	120	51	\$234,064	\$4,589	\$6,000
Karen Misjak GEAR UP Iowa Scholarship	N/A	4,130	3,151	\$3,364,521	\$1,068	\$1,200
Education & Training Voucher	\$570,264	377	137	\$512,294	\$3,739	\$5,000
Governor Terry E. Branstad Iowa State Fair Scholarship	N/A	85	3	\$6,000	\$2,000	\$2,000

COURSE TO COLLEGE

176

High schools participated

55

High schools opted to be Partner sites

346

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 coordinator surveys.

Our annual College Decision “Day” has expanded far beyond one-day celebrations at individual schools. In FY21 year we held statewide events throughout April and May.

These statewide events capture our commitment to bring more services directly to students with combined virtual and in-person events focused on partnerships within our communities.

This was the third year that we offered automated FAFSA completion reports—and the third 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.



Statewide events

Nearly 3,300 students individually participated in our statewide virtual events with hundreds more taking part in their classrooms. Additionally an average of 40 school counselors participated in our weekly calls.

- Why Apply Panel - Sept. 18, 2020
- College Prep - Sept. 20-24, 2020
- Application Fair - Sept. 25-26, 2020
- Application Fair 2.0 - Nov. 16-19, 2020
- FAFSA Line-By-Line - Nov. 11, 2020
- ‘How I Decided’ Webinars - April 8-29, 2021
- Decision Celebration - May 3-7, 2021



“Thank you for all you do to support our students. From the webinars and resources you provide it is all appreciated.”

—Urbandale High School

COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS AMERICORPS

15

College Access
host sites

6

College Success
host sites

4K+

Member
hours

566

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.

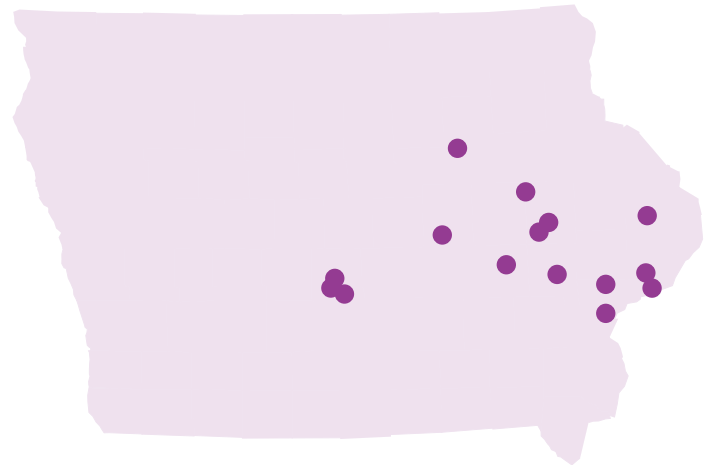
College Access Coaches follow Iowa College Aid's Course to College program to help high schools create a college-going culture by:

- 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.

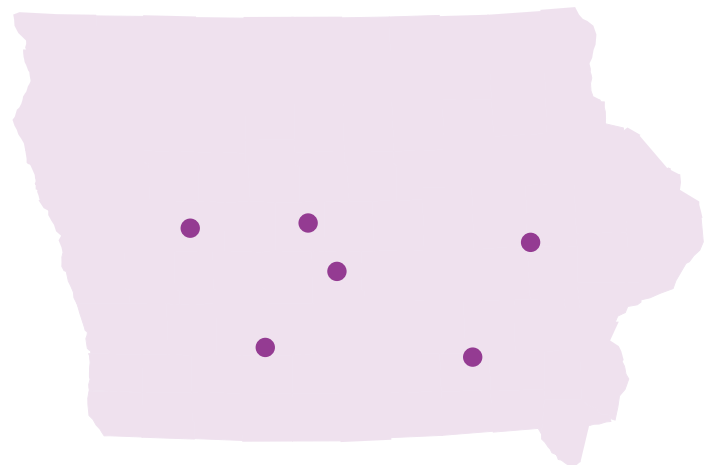
College Success Coaches support college students by:

- 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



"AmeriCorps staff was essential to Hoover FAFSA success during the 20-21 school year. With three counselors and 220 seniors, we struggle to support FAFSA completion on an individual level due to time constraints. We were able to increase our FAFSA completion by 10 percent because we had AmeriCorps workers helping our students throughout the day."

— Hoover High School (Des Moines)

“

LOCAL COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORKS

12

Communities funded

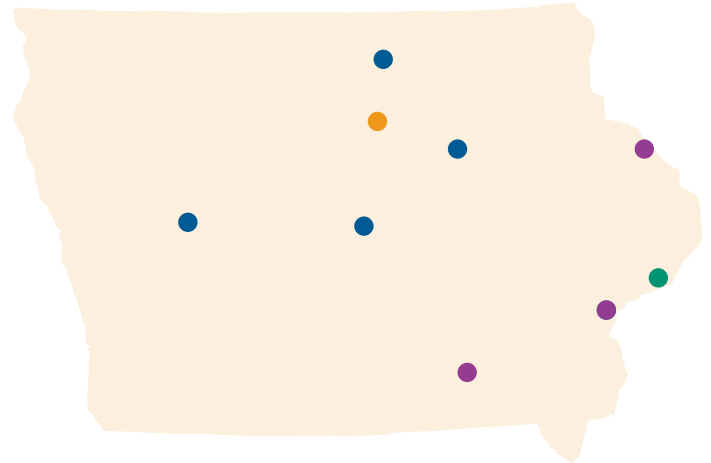
\$584K+

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 FY21 was \$584,469. Of the 12 LCANs funded, nine are centered on a geographic area, while three are specific to a statewide student demographic.

LCAN communities



“Story County College Access Network (SCCAN) is grateful for the funding and support from Iowa College Aid’s Local College Access Network (LCAN). SCCAN leadership and action team moved towards our SMART goals on four efforts with our partners.”

—Lee Chhen Stewart, Ph.D.,
Story County College Access
Network Coordinator

YEAR I

Quad Cities CAN

YEAR II

Black Hawk County CAN

Carroll Area CAN

Latinos CAN*

OPT-in CAN for System Involved Youth*

Queer Supports Advisory Team (QSAT)*

Story County CAN

YEAR III

Aligned Impact Muscatine (AIM)

Dubuque CAN

Mason City CAN

Ottumwa Cradle-College-Career (C3)

YEAR IV

Mission Possible: Franklin County

*Statewide

IOWA COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS ACADEMY

164

Enrolled
in courses

7

Professional
certificates awarded

1

Specialist certificates
awarded

8

Equity 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 FY21, 164 people from 122 school districts, community colleges, colleges/universities, and Iowa AEAs enrolled in these courses.

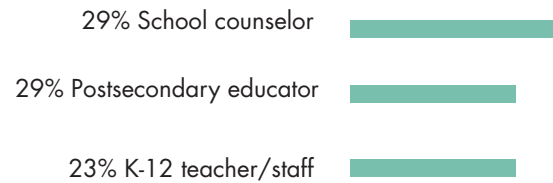
New courses developed in 2021

602: Supporting College and Career Readiness for Systems-Involved Students

701: College & Career Readiness for K-5 School Counselors & Educators



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
- Jolene Hays, School Counselor Fort Dodge Senior High School

“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



GEAR UP IOWA

6K+

Students in cohort in
FY21

25

High school
partners

12

Low-income
school districts

9

College partner
grantee sites

4K+

Students received a
form of service

GEAR UP Iowa focuses on continued support

In addition to serving nine college partner grantee sites, GUI also focused on meeting the needs of other GUI students across the state through the initiatives such as:

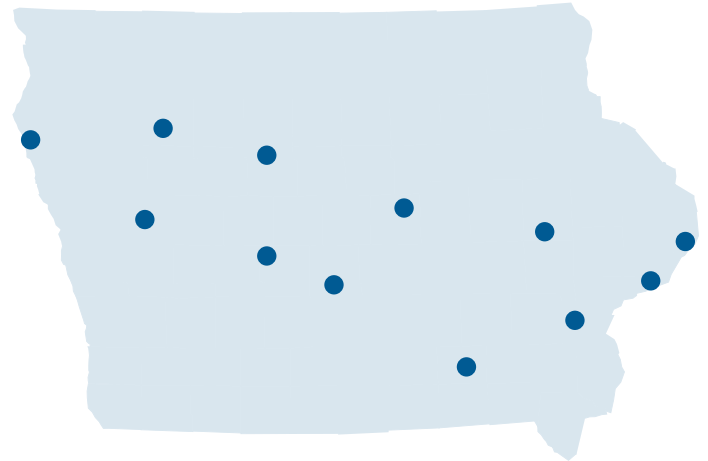
- Supporting fifth-year seniors and those not enrolled in post-secondary in the fall of 2020.
- Providing face-to-face support, virtual support and texting to ensure students are aware of the resources available on their campus and engage in activities making students feel a sense of belonging.
- Webinars throughout the school year focused on self care, sense of belonging, and balancing student life and academic success.
- Virtual mentoring support through the Texting Campaign.
- Social media platforms to engage GUI Alumni.



"GEAR UP has a significant role in educators' efforts to prepare thousands of Iowa's students for postsecondary opportunities. Being able to partner with GEAR UP to support students in their transition to college, especially during a global pandemic, proved to be a critical component of our students' success last year."

—Angie Lamb,
University of Iowa

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

- 3,205 GEAR UP Iowa students received scholarships in FY21.
- 52.2 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 increased by three percent year over year while seniors at non-GEAR UP Iowa high schools experienced a two percent decline.

VIRTUAL COLLEGE COACH

3,236

Students
opted in

55K

Text messages
sent

5,948

Text messages
received

Participation skyrockets in first full year of Virtual College Coach program

Student engagement in our text messaging platform continued to grow over FY21 with more than 3,000 students participating. The program expanded significantly over the year from 907 students opted in at the end of 2019-20. Seeing a need, we expanded our reach to additional college students in Iowa. In addition, promotion of the texting program in high schools greatly helped to increase the number of high school students enrolled to receive text message support to help with the college-going process. In addition, our promotion of the texting program in high schools helped to increase the number of high school students enrolled to receive support in the college-going process via text message. We also hired an AmeriCorps Success Coach to assist Last-Dollar Scholarship recipients and high school students virtually. With this addition, we were not only able to help students via text message, but we were able to offer virtual appointments to assist students and families with various college access and success concerns. For the 2021-22 academic year, the texting program is expanding again, and will now include all high school grade levels (9-12) and their parents, as well as all Last-Dollar Scholarship recipients.

Text Messaging Metrics as of June 30, 2021

	Future Ready Iowa	GEAR UP Iowa	College Access
Opt-ins	1,306	732	1,198
Messages sent	29,407	8,012	17,818
Messages received	3,672	782	1,494
Engagement	69.4%	32.3%	40.2%

“Throughout my first year of college, I could always rely on the messages from my coach at Iowa College Aid to be a helpful source of information and tips. My coach made sure to emphasize that assistance was just around the corner should I need it, and it really comes in handy to have an experienced coach to confide in when the stress of college becomes overwhelming. Thank you Iowa College Aid!”

– Zach Cantrell, Virtual College Coach participant



POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL AUTHORIZATION

241

Schools registered/
authorized

170

Based in Iowa

71

Based out of state

31

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.

Our agency accepts 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 within 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.

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's 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

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 or letter of credit 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 to obtain a recognized educational credential, and if applicable, job placement and graduation rates.



RESEARCH

49%

of Iowa high school seniors filed the FAFSA

62%

of Iowa high school graduates enrolled in college in the fall after graduation

200K

Iowans enrolled in postsecondary education

70%

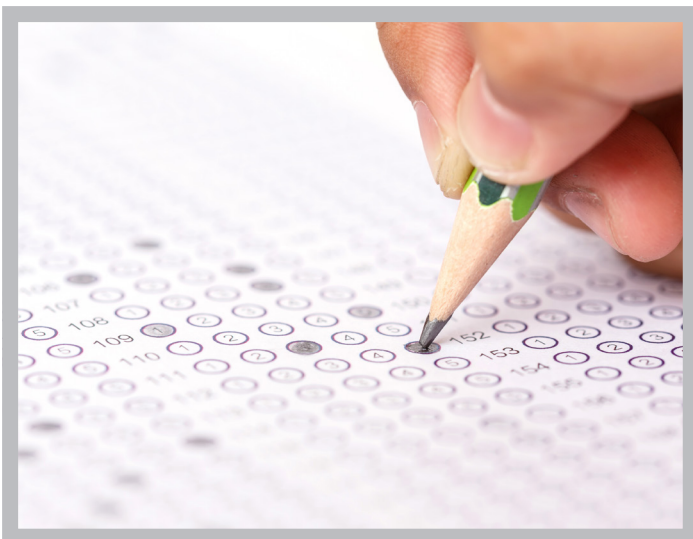
of GEAR UP Iowa students completed the ACT

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. We continue to provide every Iowa legislator with an individual dashboard detailing high school graduation rates, FAFSA filing rates, college-going rates, educational attainment level, financial aid recipients and dollar amounts, and participation in Iowa College Aid programs for their House or Senate district. Much of our research can be found on our Higher Education Data Center (IowaCollegeAid.gov/DataCenter).

EFC to SAI Transition Research

Starting in January, the research team began modeling the changes to the Expected Family Contribution formula that will be implemented in the coming years. They have successfully worked with other researchers to refine the estimations.



Research projects

- “A Stumbling Block on the Road to College: How FAFSA Verification Hinders Low-Income Students,” August 2020.
- “Annual Receipt of Multiple Scholarship and Grant Awards Report,” October 2020.
- 128,000 Iowans surveyed on the impact of COVID-19 on college enrollment decisions. October 2020.
- FAFSA data were added to the State Longitudinal Data System, creating opportunities for more research on FAFSA filing in Iowa. December 2020.
- “Higher Education for Legislators,” December 2020.
- “College Dreams Dissolved: An Examination of Factors Tied to ‘Summer Melt’ in Iowa,” January 2021.
- “The Value Proposition and Affordability of Higher Education,” March 2021.
- We hosted 13 virtual convenings with 195 participants to discuss the future of FAFSA filing in Iowa.
- Researchers from Iowa College Aid and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships compared GEAR UP Iowa 2.0 students to a non-GEAR UP peer group and found that GEAR UP students had higher high school attendance rates and higher standardized test scores.
- The annual Student and Faculty Diversity Report found that 38,998 minority students were enrolled at Iowa colleges and universities last fall, representing 18.9 percent of enrollment. Since these reports began in 1992, the number of racial and ethnic minority students enrolled in Iowa’s colleges and universities more than tripled.

COMMUNICATIONS

175K

Visits to website

3.3K

Followers on social media

89K

Free publications given away

29.5K

Digital newsletter subscriptions

Daily, weekly, and annual outreach

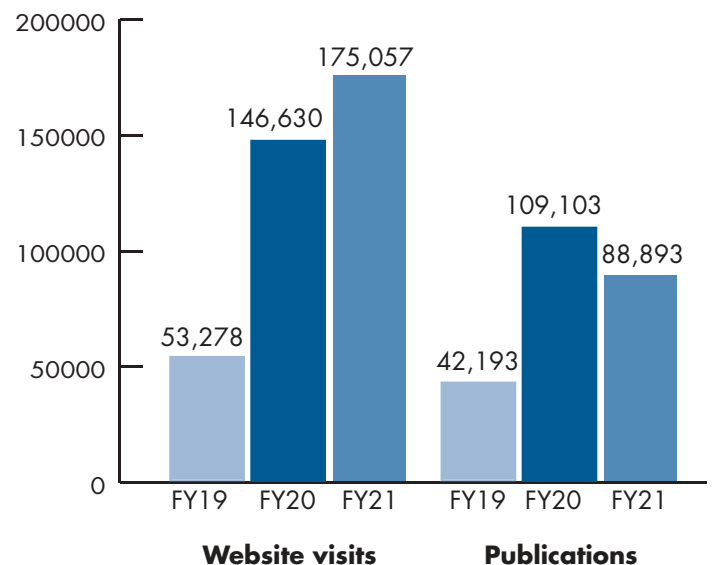
Through digital and print media, Iowa College Aid puts information in the hands of college-bound students and their families. We maintain websites and social media accounts for both the agency and the GEAR UP Iowa program. We reach followers daily through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and weekly through 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 FY21, visits to our agency website continued to increase with visits up nearly 230 percent over the last three fiscal years. 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 continued their growth and have seen 122 percent and 666 percent increases, respectively. We issued 12 news releases in FY21 and were mentioned in Iowa news outlets 91 times.



Iowa State Fair

Iowa College Aid returned to the Iowa State Fair in 2021 after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of the 2020 State Fair. ICA staff was on hand to interact with Iowans and discuss the financial aid tools available to help Iowans pursue postsecondary education.

Year-over-year metrics



FINAL FY21 OPERATING EXPENSES

	STATE APPROPRIATED PROGRAMS	STATE MANDATED/ UNFUNDED PROGRAMS*	POSTSECONDARY REGISTRATION	FEDERAL GRANT/ PROGRAMS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	FFELP/PLP COLLECTIONS, ASCENDIUM**	TOTALS
FY2021 number of programs	13	3	1	4	3	2	26
FY2021 fed award (admin)/ others				6,973,239			6,973,239
Federal CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund	4,893,168						4,893,168
FY2021 state appropriation/grant (scholarship)	79,360,087						79,360,087
FY2021 state admin/fees/others	591,534		443,608	197,249	14,000	1,955,657	3,202,048
Personnel	760,874	177,666	475,063	1,522,134	896,055	30,512	3,862,304
Travel	3,875	905	2,420	7,752	4,564	155	19,671
Supplies, printing, postage & equip repair	24,236	5,659	15,132	48,485	28,542	972	123,026
Rent communication & prof/outside serv.	76,449	17,851	47,732	152,936	90,031	3,066	388,065
State legal, audit, state reimbursements	51,579	12,044	32,204	103,184	60,743	2,068	261,822
Advertising & publicity	2,315	541	1,446	4,632	2,727	93	11,754
State transfer/reimbursements/IT exp	94,061	21,963	58,728	188,169	110,772	3,772	477,465
Total operating cost	1,013,389	236,629	632,725	2,027,292	1,193,434	40,638	5,144,107
Aid to individuals				508,752			508,752
Transfer to scholarship trust				1,591,735			1,591,735
Grants to K-12 schools/communities (sub grants)				636,947	522,949		1,159,896
Scholarships/grants	81,510,051	4,000		3,363,321			84,877,372
Total expenditures (incl. scholarship)	82,523,440	240,629	632,725	8,128,047	1,716,383	40,638	93,281,862
Fund committed for scholarship and aid	4,779,903		5046	95895			4,880,844
Net gain/loss	-421,855	-236,629	-194,163	-1,053,454	-1,702,383	1,915,019	-1,693,465
Overall % total expense	88.47%	0.26%	0.68%	8.71%	1.84%	0.04%	100.00%

*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

475 SW Fifth St., Suite D • Des Moines, IA 50309-4608
877-272-4456 • Info@IowaCollegeAid.gov