



# Nebraska State College System: Growing Together Career Scholars Initiative

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## Overview

- Growing Together Career Scholars Initiative Defined
- Growing Together Career Scholars History
- State of the Workforce in (Northeast) Nebraska
- Overview: Growing Together Career Scholars Initiative
- A Unique Cooperative Education (CO-OP) Model
- Student Perspectives
- Conclusion

## An Experiential Pathway to Educate and Retain College Graduates in Northeast Nebraska

The **Growing Together Career Scholars Initiative** at Wayne State College is a cohort-based scholarship program that connects students to business partners throughout their first three years on campus.

In their senior year, the students then complete an extensive 18-credit hour cooperative education experience over two semesters while living in a partner community.

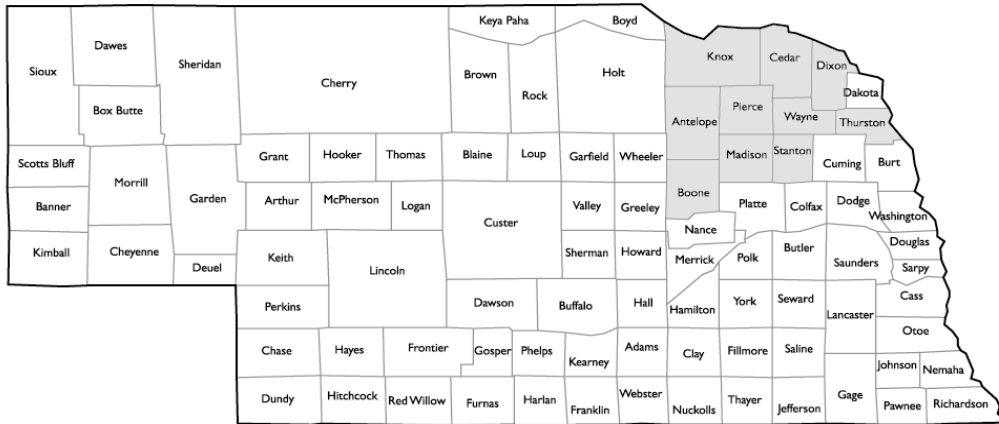
## Growing Together Career Scholars History

Northeast Nebraska  
**Growing  
Together**  
*An Aksarben workforce initiative.*

- Aksarben Foundation Initiative.
- Goal: Redesign the workforce in Northeast Nebraska to compete in a knowledge-based economy.
- Identify challenges based on workforce data.
- Launch transformational initiatives to support desired outcomes.



## State of the Workforce in (Northeast) Nebraska



- Average annual earnings: \$2,000 less than state average.
- Residents hold 35% fewer 4-year college degrees.
- Poverty rate in Northeast exceeds state average.
- Disproportionately reliant on agriculture.
- Nebraska has the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest tech-gap in the country.
- High out-migration of 20 to 34-year-old graduates.
- Nebraska slow growth in entrepreneurship (0.27).
- Over 50,000 job openings in Nebraska.

# Growing Together Career Scholars History



## Overview: Growing Together Career Scholars Initiative

### Recruit High School Seniors

- Application + interview process
- Majors **based on data** + need
- \$24,000 in scholarship

### Freshman - Junior Years on Campus

- Living-Learning-Community
- Accelerated core curriculum
- Engage with employers

### Senior Year Living + Working in Community

- Cooperative Education Year
- Paid 30-hour work week
- Awarded **18-credit hours**
- Live in Designated Housing

### Graduate College

- True 4-year time to degree
- Year of real-world experience
- Job opportunity in Nebraska
- Less debt

## A Unique Cooperative Education (CO-OP) Model

**RECALIBRATES** how students “learn by doing” and how WSC meets workforce needs.



### Workforce Diverse

5 Majors | 23 Fields of Study

Data and Economic Based

+

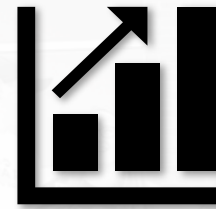


### Accelerated

3 + 1 College Experience

18 Credit Hours Senior Year

+



### Scalable

Cohorts | Communities

Multiple Industries

+



### Funded

\$24,000 Scholarship

Nebraska Legislative Support



# Workforce Diverse = Workforce Scalable

Business | Information Technology | Industrial Technology | Communication | Education



- Accounting
- Agribusiness
- CIS-Networking
- Computer Science
- Electronic Media
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Management
- Marketing
- Public Accounting

- Accounting
- Agribusiness
- Computer Science
- Construction
- Electronic Media
- Elementary Education
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Journalism
- Management
- Manufacturing
- Marketing

- Accounting
- Agribusiness
- Computer Science
- Construction
- Drafting and Design
- Electronic Media
- Elementary Education
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Journalism
- Management
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Programmer/Analyst

**Class 2024** 55% Male 45% Female  
**Class 2025** 55% Female 45% Male  
**Class 2026** 53% Male 47% Female

### Majors

85% Business & Technology

15% Education & Communication

### Hometowns

Within 150 miles of WSC

99% Nebraska (Iowa/S. Dakota)

58 Different communities

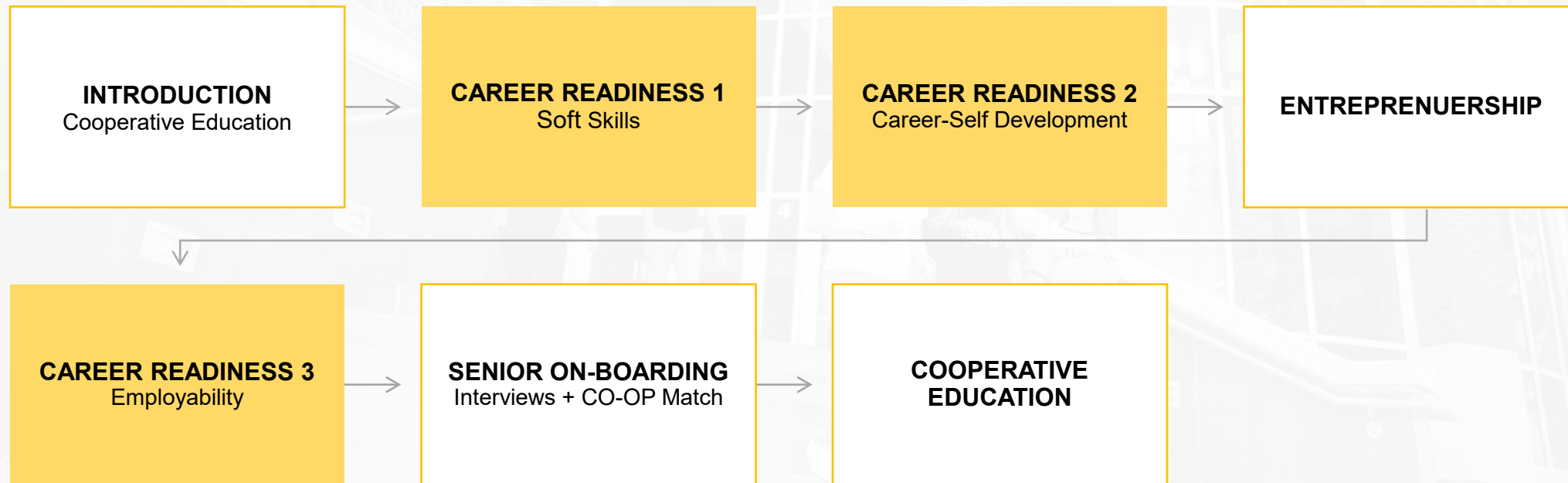
### New Fields of Study

Education and Industrial Technology



# Fundamentals of Professional Practice

Six-semesters of team-based learning as a cohort.



## A Robust Collegiate Entrepreneurship Program

“All genuine learning comes from experience” John Dewey.

### Wayne State College CEO Chapter

Articulates soft skills of entrepreneurship, critical-thinking, problem-solving, leadership, communication and collaboration on domestic and global scale.

- Established with 31 members and Executive Leadership Team
- CEO National Conference in Florida 2021/Chicago 2022
- Morningside Case Study and i2i Business Model Competitions
- Invest Nebraska: co-working office space, mentoring and networking



## Interconnected Lifestyle in Student Housing



## Program Benefits

### STUDENT BENEFITS

- ✓ Gain a year of “real-world” experience without extending time to degree.
- ✓ Earn **18 college credit hours** towards degree completion for experiential learning.
- ✓ Connect with employers today, not tomorrow.
- ✓ Find a sense of belonging – socially, academically, and professionally.
- ✓ Graduate higher GPA, career-clarity, and hold academic motivation to graduate.

### EMPLOYER BENEFITS

- ✓ Students arrive with high-tech skills that can provide new perspectives and critical thinking.
- ✓ Develops a recruiting pipeline of **“known talent”** while onboarding into your work culture.
- ✓ A way to preview and train future employees a year before graduation. **Predictive hiring model.**
- ✓ Access to a skilled, short-term, cost-effective workforce.
- ✓ Reduced costs associated with recruiting, onboarding and training new hires.





# Midwestern Higher Education Compact





## Don't limit your challenges. Challenge your limits.

Implemented a student, leadership and employer recognition program.



*Unified*



*Recognized*



*Prepared*



*Accomplished*



**What students are saying ...**

CEO Tampa was an amazing trip that brought me out of my comfort zone. The program has taught me so much about myself and brought out my leadership and communication skills.

The CO-OP program and cohort has helped me create a social network among my peers. By being in the program, I am investing in myself and my future.



**What employers are saying ...**

Their enthusiasm, desire to learn and openness to new ideas are both contagious and challenging.

I am grateful to be a part of the Wayne State College's Cooperative Education Program as we develop relationships with career-ready students to improve our business and our community.

**Thank you!**