



SUCCESS IN THE WORKS



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Executive Summary

The Avenue Scholars program, established in response to the challenges encountered by students navigating adversity, notably poverty, has achieved remarkable progress over the course of 15 years. Our dedicated staff is committed to empowering young individuals to unlock their full potential by dismantling the barriers that hinder their education, training, and career attainment. Our primary goal is to equip students with the experiences and tools needed to actively choose a high-demand career field in the Omaha area, while offering students extraordinary support. In this Impact Report, we showcase the key outcomes of our 15-year journey and our ongoing work in 2023.

Our success comes from our Avenue Scholars secret sauce: our distinctive program features, guiding philosophy, and effective strategies that continue to demonstrate a proof of concept that earns historic results for our students and our community. Initial research on Avenue Scholars’ return on investment is incredibly promising. We will continue to partner with researchers to review and analyze the value of the program and share our findings. To learn more, please visit avescholars.org.

As we put this report together, a theme developed: Avenue Scholars has the privilege of working with the best of the best students. After all, students who successfully navigate adversity, remain hopeful, and doggedly pursue their full potential become extraordinary professionals. It is why we refer to our students as “Scholars.” It is not just a matter of terminology; it's a powerful message of hope and aspiration. We are very clear about this: regardless of a student’s circumstances, they have incredible potential to achieve great things.

Please take a moment and learn about what is possible when dedicated staff, funded by generous donors, partner with students, educators, and businesses in the Avenue Scholars program. If this journey of progress and transformation resonates with you, please reach out to us. Your involvement can make a profound difference in the lives of the students we serve and the communities we impact.

- Ken Bird, Ed.D.
Avenue Scholars President/CEO
Fall 2023

Mission & Core Values

The Avenue Scholars program provides an array of resources to help Scholars persist to career entry. Each Scholar is assigned a Career Coach at both the high school and postsecondary/career levels of the program to guide their personal and career-related development during the junior and senior years of high school (High School Career Coach) and during postsecondary training and into career entry (Postsecondary Career Coach). Scholars attending Metropolitan Community College (MCC) also receive

support from MCC College Success Navigators, who assist Scholars with college-related issues (course enrollment, financial aid, academic support, etc.). Additionally, the Avenue Scholars Business Outreach Team engages area businesses to provide career awareness, exploration, and employment opportunities, while the Avenue Scholars Student Support Staff provides group education and referrals to community resources to address life and social/emotional needs.

Our Values

We operate by living out the following core values:

Hope

We focus on strengths and opportunities rather than obstacles.

Respect

We value others and promote their success.



Integrity

We are consistent, dependable, and honest about who we are and what we do.

Innovation

We implement dynamic programming that facilitates the growth and development of our students and the community.

Collaboration

We create a culture of mutual trust, open dialogue, and positive results.

Program Guarantees

To ensure that Scholars are well-equipped for employment in their chosen industry area, Avenue Scholars aspires to have each of its participants meet the following five “Program Guarantees” upon completing the program:

Education/Training:

A committed Avenue Scholar participant graduates from high school, completes relevant career education or training, and is goal oriented toward an Avenue Scholar approved pathway.

Work Experience:

A committed Avenue Scholar participant demonstrates a successful work history.

Work-Ready Skills:

A committed Avenue Scholar participant demonstrates work-ready habits and skills, including responsibility, work ethic, communication, positive attitude, professionalism, teamwork, and problem solving.

Attendance:

A committed Avenue Scholar participant demonstrates consistent attendance at school, work, and Avenue Scholar engagements.

Financial and Personal Well-Being:

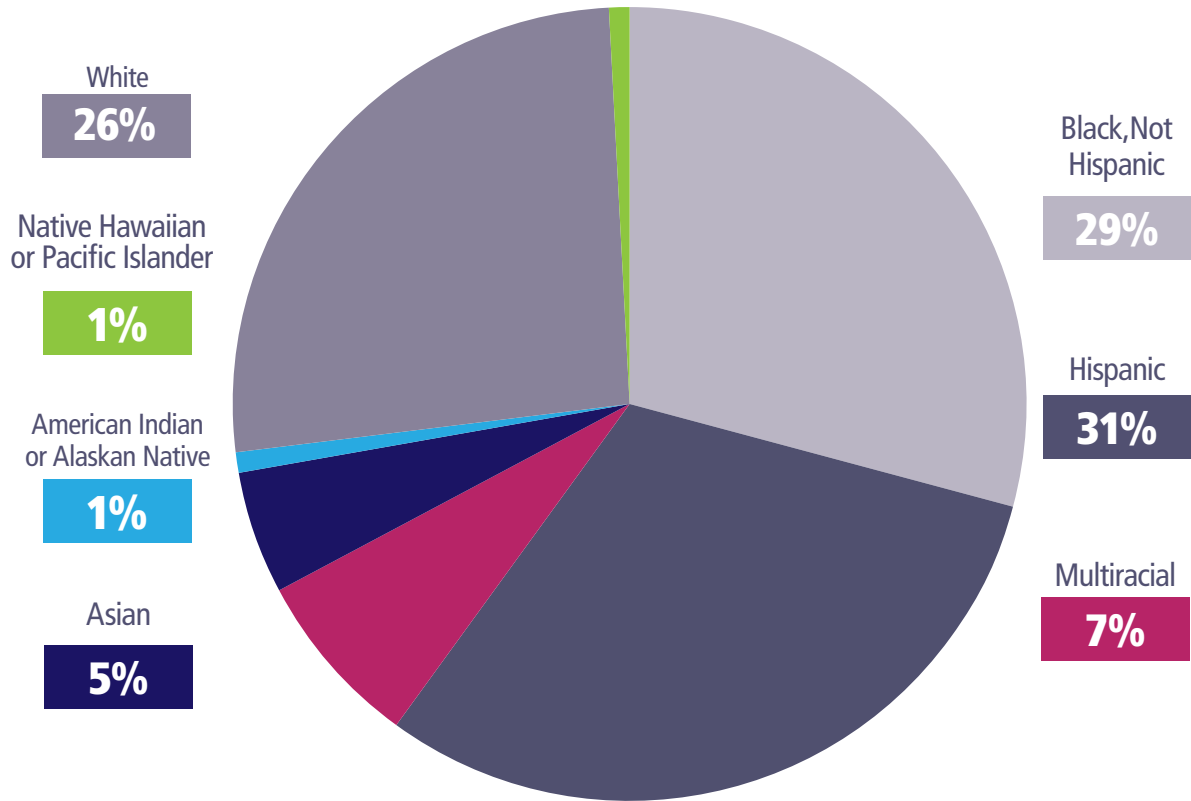
A committed Avenue Scholar participant demonstrates the ability to:

- Overcome barriers to employment, financial, physical, and mental well-being, and;
- Access community resources and services when necessary.

15th Anniversary Highlights: By the Numbers

OVERVIEW FOR OMAHA LOCATION

DEMOGRAPHICS



*Excludes students for whom race was unreported

25 to 752

25 SCHOLARS IN 2008 AND GREW TO 752 IN 2023

50:50

MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPANTS

3,700

SCHOLARS RECRUITED

TRUSTING PARTNERSHIPS

EDUCATION

11

HIGH SCHOOLS

6

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

BUSINESS

1,762

UNIQUE EMPLOYERS OF AVENUE SCHOLARS SINCE 2014

2.5

THE AVERAGE SCORE SCHOLARS RECEIVE ON THEIR EMPLOYER FEEDBACK SURVEYS WITH SUPERVISORS OUT OF 3.0

6

HIGH-DEMAND CAREER FIELDS

UNPRECEDENTED STUDENT SUPPORT



CAREER COACHES



BUSINESS OUTREACH TEAM



STUDENT SUPPORT STAFF

FACTS:

Every Scholar has a personal champion.

Consistent support from junior year of high school to career.

15th Anniversary Highlights: By the Numbers

OVERVIEW FOR OMAHA LOCATION

FUNDING SECURED

\$14,800,000

FUNDING FOR GRANTS AT MCC

SAVINGS PROGRAM

A special support fund to match Scholars' savings for a car, housing down payment or tools.

\$258,000

MONEY SCHOLARS SAVED
FOR VEHICLES OR HOUSING
SINCE 2017

\$167,000

MONEY AVENUE SCHOLARS
MATCHED FOR VEHICLES OR
HOUSING SINCE 2017

CUMULATIVE BUDGET

\$59,423,654

2009 - 2023
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET

FOUNDING FUNDERS

HOLLAND FOUNDATION | LOZIER FOUNDATION
SUZANNE & WALTER SCOTT FOUNDATION
THE SHERWOOD FOUNDATION | WEITZ FAMILY FOUNDATION
WILLIAM AND RUTH SCOTT FAMILY FOUNDATION

ACCESS TO LEARNING PATHWAYS

SUCCESS = A MEANINGFUL JOB IN A CAREER PATHWAY
THAT HAS OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH AND
ADVANCEMENT.

3

LOCATIONS SCALED FROM ONE
LOCATION, OMAHA, TO THREE
LOCATIONS INCLUDING SOUTHWEST
IOWA AND DES MOINES.

35

UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS
PROVIDING CERTIFICATIONS AND
DEGREES TO SCHOLARS SINCE 2018.

5,928+

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH
SCHOLARS FOR CAREER PLANNING
AND SUPPORT SINCE 2020.

6,635+

INTERVENTIONS BY AVENUE
SCHOLARS' STUDENT SUPPORT STAFF
SINCE 2014.

HISTORIC OUTCOMES

94%

ATTENDANCE RATE FOR ALL
HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARS
SINCE 2017

96%

HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARS
GRADUATION RATE
SINCE 2014

861
CERTIFICATIONS
OR ASSOCIATE
DEGREES
SINCE 2018

742
ALUMNI
SINCE 2018

3:4

SCHOLARS WHO TRANSITION TO
CAREER TRAINING REACH ALUM
STATUS IN A CAREER
SINCE 2018

85%

OF SCHOLARS LEAVE THE PROGRAM
EMPLOYED REGARDLESS OF WHEN
OR HOW THEY LEFT

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The benefits estimated at each level of success are
cumulative as Scholars progress through the program:

442% ROI for Scholars graduating high school

69% ROI for Scholars continuing on to
career training or college

219% ROI for Scholars graduating with
an associate degree

(Source: Analysis prepared in 2020 by Josie Schafer, Director of the Center for
Public Affairs Research, at University of Nebraska at Omaha.)

FACT SCHOLARS GRADUATE WITH
NO EDUCATION DEBT

AVENUE SCHOLARS PROGRAM STAFF GROWTH

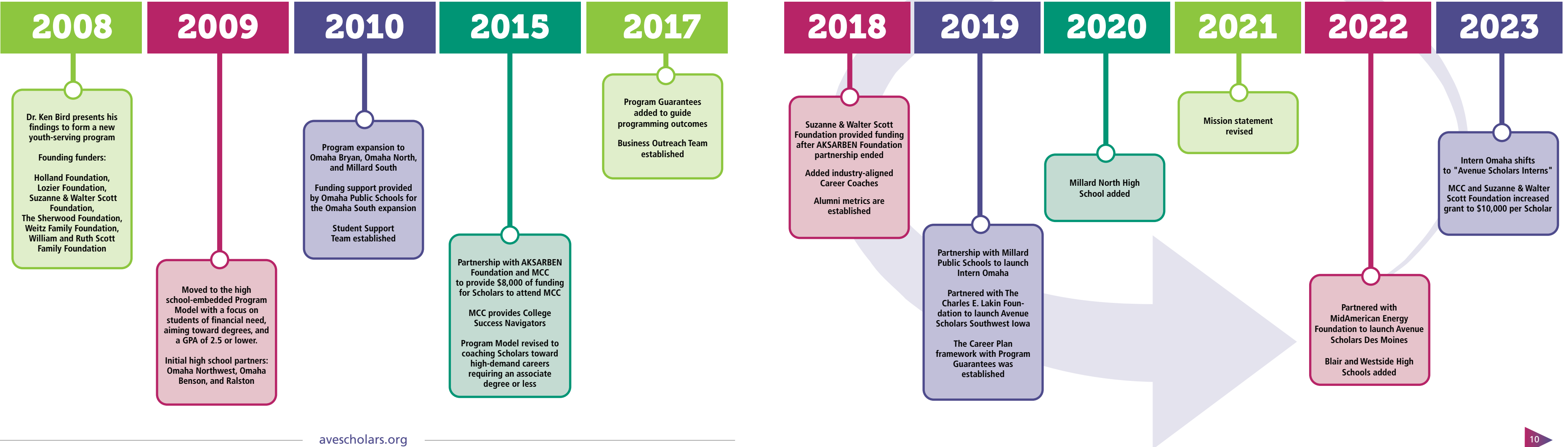
AUGUST 2009

4

AUGUST 2023

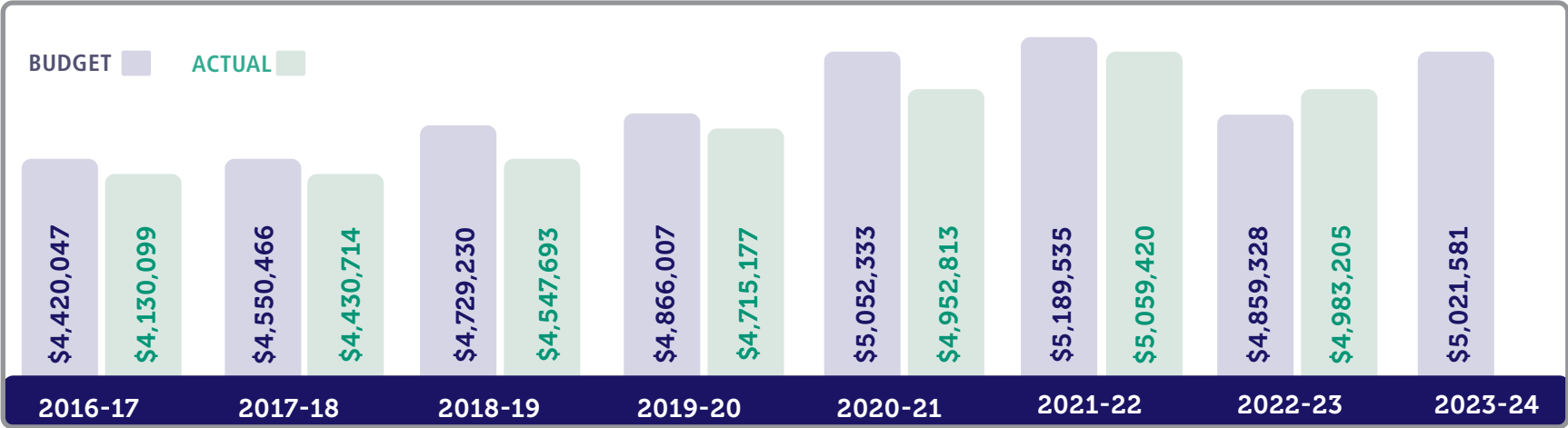
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Timeline

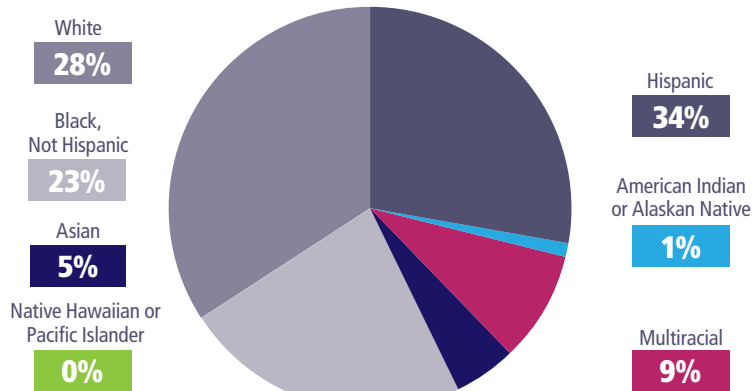


2023: By the Numbers

OUR BUDGET

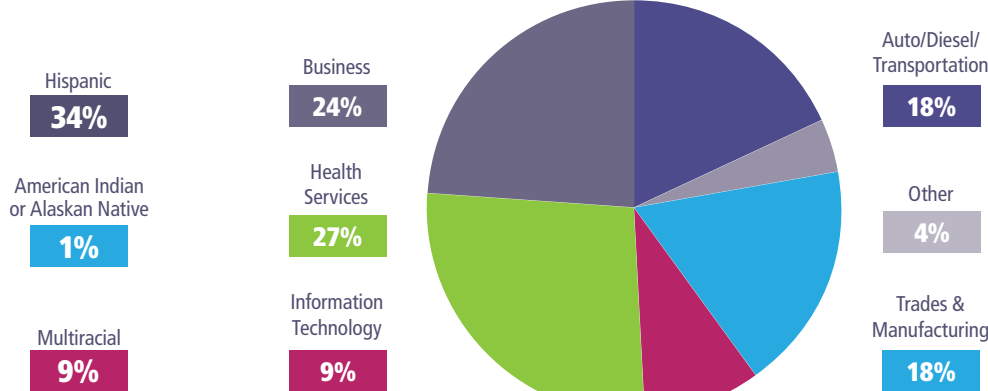


PARTICIPANTS BY RACE, FALL 2023-24



*Excludes students for whom race was unreported

PARTICIPANTS BY INDUSTRY SECTOR, FALL 2023-24



752

ENROLLMENT FOR 2023-2024

In 2023, the Avenue Scholars program expanded to **11 schools** with the addition of Blair High School, in collaboration with Metropolitan Community College (MCC). The existing partnership between MCC and Blair made Blair an ideal location for the expansion of the Avenue Scholars program.

“It’s exciting to know all of our kids in the program will be supported all the way through high school, through college, and into the start of their careers. This program helps them find their passion and ignite that passion,”
- Blair Superintendent, Dr. Randy Gilson

Participants by Gender Fall 2023-24

MALE.....▶53%

FEMALE.....▶47%

Update on impact of business partners and enrollment:

STUDENTS ARE EMPLOYED AT

433

UNIQUE BUSINESSES

AVENUE SCHOLARS NEW BUSINESS PARTNERS ADDED IN 2023

59

Enrollment:

436

HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARS

316

POSTSECONDARY SCHOLARS

TOTAL: 752

"I would have never been able to dream of being where I am without the help from Avenue Scholars, not only financially but their continued belief in my success is truly the reason I am here today."
- Katie Besse, Avenue Scholar, Alumni

Program Model

Since 2008, Avenue Scholars has provided individualized support services to help Scholars of need identify, persist toward, and ultimately enter financially sustaining careers.

PHASE 1: HIGH SCHOOL

ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

Students are selected for the program during their sophomore year based on financial need (eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunches or a federal Pell Grant), interest in pursuing a career in a high-demand career field requiring an associate degree or less, and attendance at an Avenue Scholar partner high school.

RECRUIT
SOPHOMORE



COACHING
JUNIOR



COACHING
SENIOR

HIGH SCHOOL CAREER COACHES

At the high school level, each Avenue Scholar is supported by a High School Career Coach, who guides Scholars' personal and career-related development through intrusive personal support and teaches for-credit courses to Avenue Scholars in partner high schools.

PHASE 2: CAREER TRAINING (POSTSECONDARY)

AVENUE SCHOLARS POSTSECONDARY TRAINING GRANT

Avenue Scholars seniors who complete the high school phase of the program receive ongoing coaching, access to programming, and funding assistance to complete their education/training — up to an associate degree — with an approved Avenue Scholars postsecondary partner organization.

COLLEGE SUCCESS NAVIGATORS

MCC College Success Navigators provide expertise in designated career fields of study and managing MCC-related processes, such as course registration, financial aid, etc.

POSTSECONDARY CAREER COACHES

AS Postsecondary Career Coaches provide individualized support to help Scholars for six months following career entry.

PHASE 3: CAREER ENTRY

Focused on high-demand, financially sustaining careers requiring an associate degree or less



THE CHARLES E. LAKIN
FOUNDATION'S HEALTHCARE
CAREER PATHWAY



INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY



AUTO/DIESEL/
TRANSPORATION



TRADES/
MANUFACTURING/
ENGINEERING



EDUCATION



BUSINESS/OFFICE
PROCESSES

AVENUE SCHOLARS ALUMNI

- Secure full-time employment
- Earn a living wage
- Have access to health insurance and retirement benefits through their employer
- Work in a field aligned with Avenue Scholars supported industries
- Identify opportunities for upword mobility

BUSINESS OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Avenue Scholars Business Outreach Team collaborates with area businesses to provide Scholars with career-building

opportunities, such as career awareness and exploration events, mock interviews, job shadows, internships, and part and full-time employment.

STUDENT SUPPORT

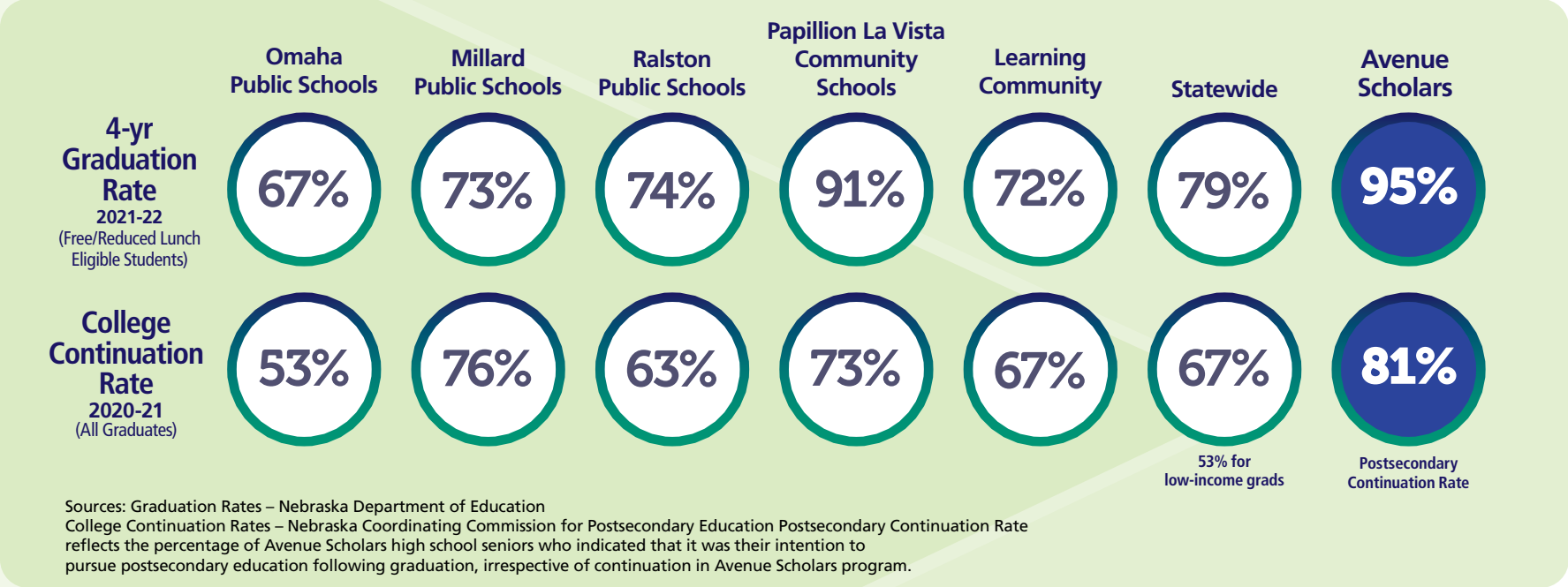
Avenue Scholars Student Support Team assists Scholars in addressing basic life and social/emotional needs through

referrals to community resources and group programming.

Education Partners

Founded in 2008 by a small group of Omaha philanthropists, Avenue Scholars provides comprehensive, individualized support to help Omaha-area youth of financial need identify, prepare for, and ultimately enter financially sustaining, high-demand careers requiring career training or continuing education. Support begins in the Scholars' junior year of high school and continues uninterrupted through postsecondary education/training and for six months following career entry.

Scholars are selected for the program based on financial need (eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunches or a federal Pell Grant), interest in pursuing a career in a high-demand career field requiring career training or continuing education, and attendance at an Avenue Scholars partner high school. As of the fall of 2023, Avenue Scholars is serving Scholars in 11 partner high schools across six school districts:



Business Partners

Avenue Scholars collaborates with businesses to provide Scholars with meaningful workplace experiences that lead to employment opportunities.

CAREER AWARENESS/ EXPLORATION
Be a part of events where high school Scholars explore possible careers within specific industry areas.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH
Participate in mock interviews, job shadows, and other Avenue Scholars programs.

REFERRALS
Partner with Avenue Scholars to provide referrals for seasonal, part-time or full-time job opportunities.

INTERSHIPS
Offer meaningful internship opportunities that allow Scholars to gain valuable work experience within specific industry areas. Internships include dedicated mentorship, skill-building opportunities, and competitive pay. We facilitate internships at two levels:

HIGH SCHOOL
Our Intern Program offers work-based learning experiences to seniors in the greater metro area.

POSTSECONDARY
These opportunities target Scholars pursuing a two-year degree, vocational certificate, or going straight to work.

Avenue Scholars began the 2023 program year with **144 business partners** in the Greater Metro Area.

Scholar Profiles

CURRENT SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

“The main reason why I want to become a physical therapist and work in healthcare is helping other people...”[My Career Coach has] always been there to help me through school because I’m essentially a first-gen student. My older sister tried going to college and it was very hard because of the money aspect. I had no idea how college worked. [My Career Coach has] always been that back up to help me through the process – applications, resume reviews, personal statements. She advised me through all my work. She got me into Clarkson and into QLI. She’s a very big player in this experience.”

- Jimmy Nguyen, Scholar



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

“When Avenue Scholars found me, I did not realize how big this opportunity was and how it would alter the trajectory of my life. I contribute all my success to this program, as I know without it, I would have never gone to college, adopted the mindset that led me to where I am today, or be as happy and fulfilled as I am with my life and career.”

- Claire Cleveland, Alumni

Board of Directors & Staff

Board of Directors

- Susie Buffett
Chairperson
- Jeff Schmid
Director
- Calvin Sisson
Director
- Katie Weitz, Ph.D.
Director

Ken Bird, Ed.D.
President/CEO

2023-24 Staff Roster

Organizational & Program Administration

- Ken Bird, Ed.D.
President/CEO
- Lindsay Decker
Sr. Director of Communications & Development
- Lisa Sterba, Ed.D.
Sr. Director of Programs
- Kris Valentin
Sr. Director of Human Resources & Administrative Services

- Catie Dagle
Director of Information & Quality Assurance
- Michael Johnson
Assistant Director of Programs
- Sheree Haynie
Office & Staff Assistant
- Kristy Preuss
Office & Staff Assistant

High School Team

- Zadie Johnson
Department Head
Papillion Career Coach
- Jose Almanza
Omaha South Career Coach
- Vanessa Collins
Omaha Northwest Career Coach
- Terrence Gillian
Omaha Benson Career Coach
- Kamina Lemons
Omaha Bryan Career Coach
- Marquita Lambert
Millard South Career Coach
- Beth Leach
Westside Career Coach

- Marcus Manley
Millard North Career Coach
- Tom Prescott
Ralston Career Coach
- Jordyn Smith
Blair Career Coach
- Fred Starks
Omaha North Career Coach

Postsecondary/Career Team

- Tonya Fairgood
Department Head
Postsecondary Career Coach
- Dan Corral
Postsecondary Career Coach
- Steve Johnston
Postsecondary Career Coach
- Tom Robertson
Postsecondary Career Coach
- Canei Rodriquez
Postsecondary Career Coach
- Anthony Tate
Postsecondary Career Coach

Business Outreach Team

- Audrey Gustin
Department Head
Business Relations Manager
- Meagan Botello
Career Awareness & Exploration Coordinator
- Shaney Schaefer
Intern & Employment Coordinator

Student Support Staff

- Ashley Knott
Student Support Manager
- Guadalupe Perez-Aguilar
Student Support Assistant

Avenue Shared Services

- Mike Alvano
Vice President & Treasurer
CFO of Avenue Scholars
- Penny Darnell
Accounting Manager

Avenue Scholars, the leader in bridging the gap between education and business, guarantees careers for our youth of hope and need through supportive relationships, individualized coaching, education, and training.

Visit our website to learn more and support our work



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