



AVENUE  
SCHOLARS

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2024  
Impact Report

## **Honoring a Legacy, Embracing the Future**

Avenue Scholars marked a leadership transition in 2024, and we congratulate our founder, Dr. Ken Bird, on his retirement. Under his leadership, Avenue Scholars grew from its humble beginnings with 25 Scholars to a thriving community of over 750 Scholars annually, achieving remarkable outcomes. Dr. Bird was steadfast in reminding us of our mission: to help Scholars of hope and need find a path toward independence through meaningful careers. We honor his legacy as we enter this exciting new chapter, driven by the same commitment to our Scholars' success. We will always hear him say, "Get to work!" until the job is done.



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## Dear Friends of Avenue Scholars,

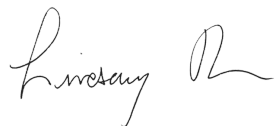
On September 1, 2024, I proudly accepted the role of CEO at Avenue Scholars. I am honored and excited to lead this incredible organization into its next chapter. Over the years, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact Avenue Scholars has on the lives of young people in our community, leading us to develop the Five Pillars of Transformative Impact, which guides us in service to our Scholars. The commitment of the Avenue Scholars staff, the generosity of our supporters, the dedication of our education and business partners, and the resilience of our Scholars are the foundation of our success.

In 2024, we made significant strides toward expanding our reach and ensuring more Scholars have access to the support they need. Our new partnership with the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties will allow us to extend our model of comprehensive support and career readiness to even more students across Omaha. I am eager to continue building on this momentum.

I am deeply grateful to the organization for entrusting me with the opportunity to lead this incredible work. The legacy of care, service, and commitment to our mission is a testament to the dedication of everyone who has shaped Avenue Scholars over the years. I am committed to continuing this important work, upholding the highest standards of service and impact to ensure our lasting success.

Lastly, thank you for your support of Avenue Scholars. Together with the Avenue Scholars team, we will keep empowering young people to reach their full potential and create a brighter future for themselves, their families, and our community. Your support makes all the difference, and we truly appreciate you for it.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lindsay Decker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "L" and "D".

Lindsay Decker  
CEO, Avenue Scholars



## 5 Pillars for Transformative Impact

Guiding Avenue Scholars Staff in Service to Scholars



### Recruitment

We bring in passionate and determined Scholars who are ready to transform their futures.



### Retention

We ensure our Scholars receive the ongoing support and resources they need to stay on the path to success. To us, retention is an extension of recruitment.



### Program Participation

We engage our Scholars in Avenue Scholars programs and activities that foster growth, learning, and deeper ties with our organization.



### Career Coaching & Planning

We guide our Scholars using personalized career coaching and planning to help them achieve their professional goals.



### Partnerships

We build and sustain strong, supportive connections within the education and business partner community that empower and uplift our Scholars.

# 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 (High School Career Coach) and career levels (Career Services Coach) of the program to guide their personal and career-related development during their junior and senior years of high school, during training, and into career entry. Additionally, the Avenue Scholars Business Outreach Team engages area businesses to provide career awareness, exploration, and employment opportunities, while the Avenue Scholars Community Resource staff collaborates with school district professionals to provide referrals to community resources addressing life and social/emotional needs.

## Our Mission

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.

## 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 Scholars 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, Avenue Scholars aspires to have each of its participants meet the following five “Program Guarantees” upon completing the program:

## Education/Training

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

## Work Experience

A committed Avenue Scholars participant demonstrates a successful work history.

## Work-Ready Skills

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

## Attendance

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

## Financial and Personal Well-Being

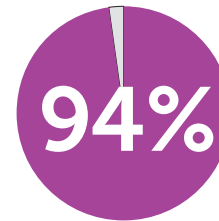
- A committed Avenue Scholars participant demonstrates the ability to:
- Overcome barriers of all types including financial, physical, and mental, which may affect employment.
  - Access community resources and services when necessary.

# OUR IMPACT by the numbers

## Historic Outcomes



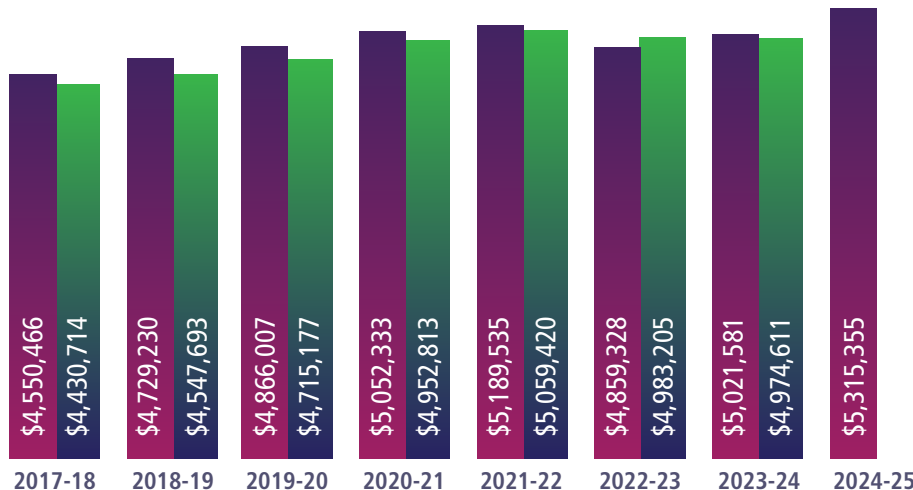
High School  
Graduation  
Rate since  
2014



High School  
Attendance  
Rate since  
2014

## Our Budget

Budget Actual



## 2023-24 Program Year



**11** High Schools

**6** School Districts



**928**

Career Awareness  
Experiences Attended  
by Juniors and Seniors

→ Juniors averaged 2 experiences  
per year

**98%**

High School  
Graduation Rate  
(Class of 2024)

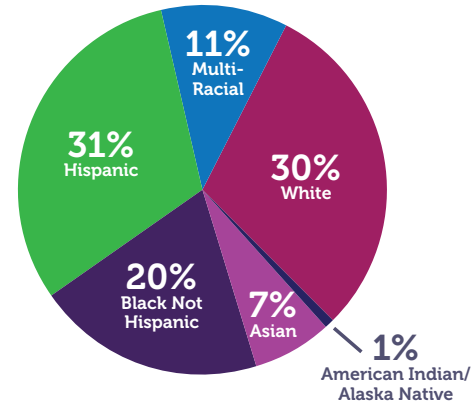
**82%\***

Postsecondary  
Transition Rate  
(Class of 2024)

\*Reflects the percentage of Avenue Scholars high school seniors who indicated that it was their intention to pursue postsecondary education following graduation, irrespective of continuation in the Avenue Scholars program.

## 2024-25 Program Year

### Participants by Race



High School  
Enrollment



Career  
Services

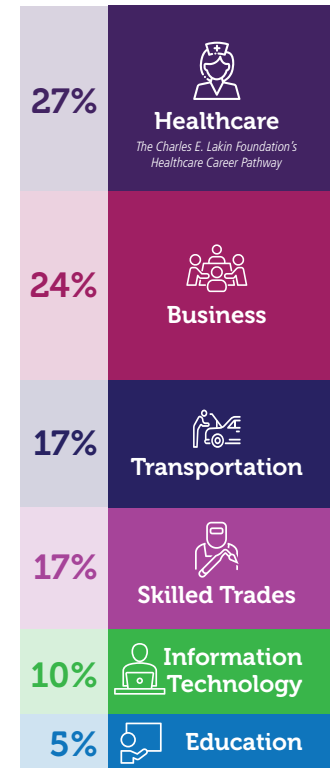


Enrollment  
Total

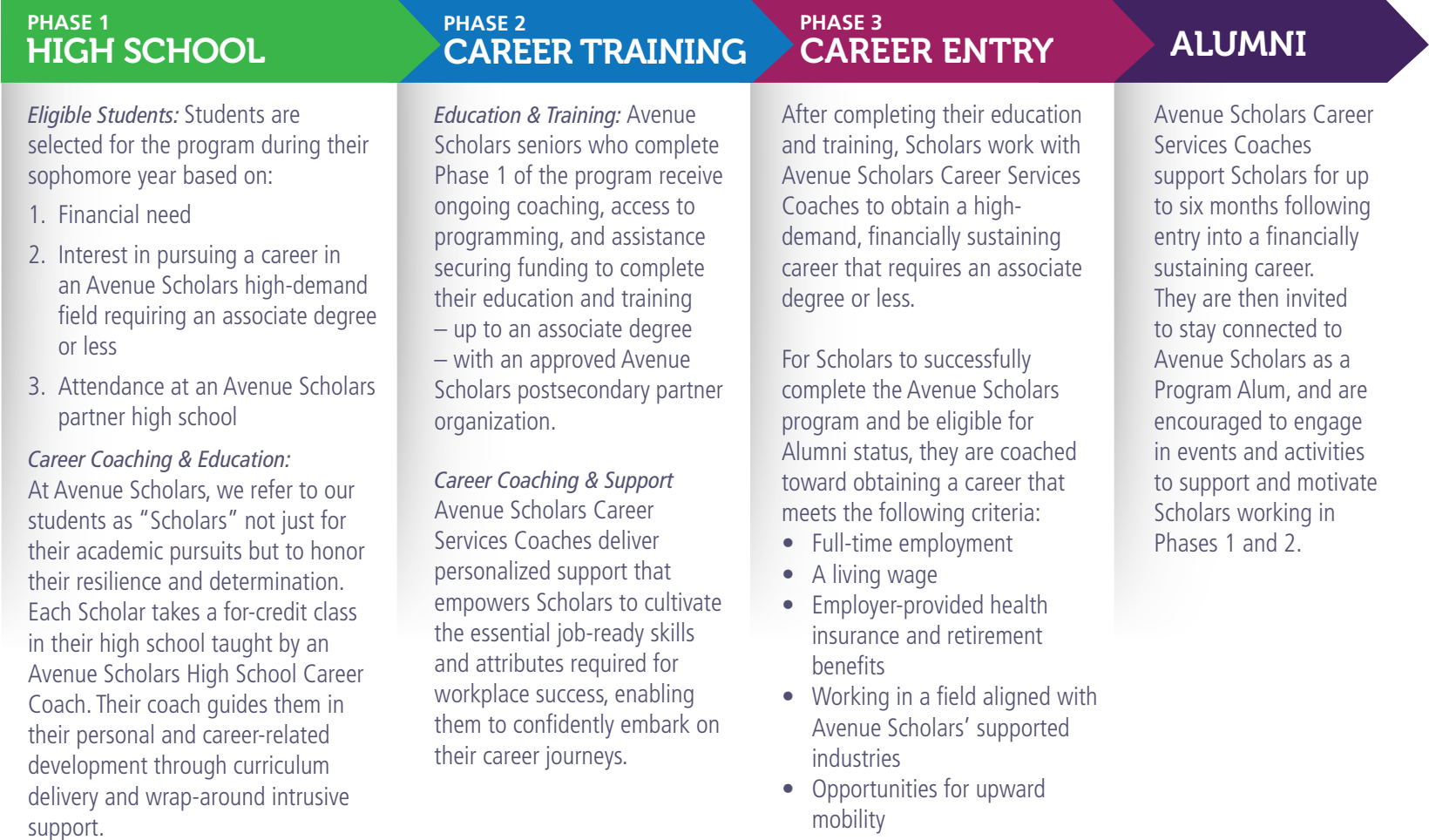


Scholars are employed at  
**324** unique  
businesses

### Participants by Industry Sectors



# Program Model



## Ongoing Support

Scholars Receive Ongoing Support From Junior Year to Alumni Status

- The Avenue Scholars Business Outreach Team collaborates closely with Avenue Scholars' business partners to co-create impactful career-building experiences. These include career awareness and exploration events, mock interviews, job shadowing opportunities, internships, and referrals to both full- and part-time employment. This partnership not only enhances the quality of these initiatives but also ensures that Scholars receive real-world insights and access to valuable resources, setting them on a path to professional success.
- All Career Coaches work with Omaha area education and business partners to help Scholars navigate their education and training needs.
- The Avenue Scholars Community Resource Team collaborates with student support services within Avenue Scholars partner schools and community organizations to provide wraparound support, addressing challenges that may impact a student's high school graduation and career progression.

# 6 High Demand Career Fields



**Business**



**Education**



**Healthcare**

*(The Charles E. Lakin Foundation's Healthcare Career Pathway)*



**Information Technology**



**Skilled Trades**



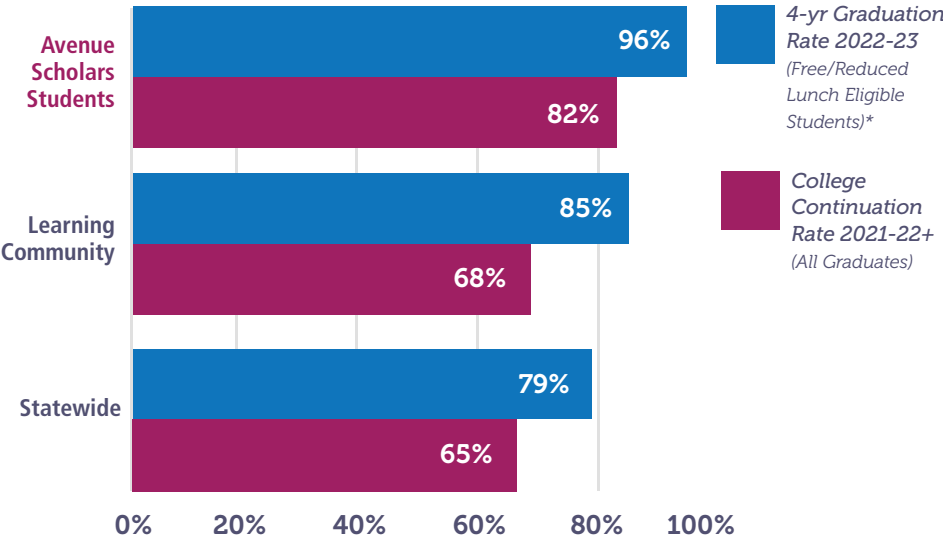
**Transportation**

# Education Partners

Avenue Scholars is dedicated to helping Omaha-area youth overcome educational barriers by offering personalized, continuous support that begins in their junior year of high school. This support not only guides Scholars toward graduation but also helps them explore financially sustaining, high-demand careers. The assistance extends through career training and the first six months of their career.

Eligibility for the program is based on financial need, determined by qualifying for free or reduced-price school lunch or a Federal Pell Grant. Scholars must also demonstrate an interest in pursuing a high-demand career field and attend an Avenue Scholars partner high school.

## Graduation & College Continuation Rates by District



\*Data sourced from the Nebraska Department of Education | +Data sourced from The Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education's Postsecondary Continuation Rate outcomes for 2021-22. Avenue Scholars high school senior data is calculated by self reports of those who indicated it was their intention to pursue postsecondary education following graduation, irrespective of continuation in Avenue Scholars program.



Blair



Millard North



Millard South



Omaha Benson



Omaha Bryan



Omaha North



Omaha Northwest



Omaha South



Papillion La Vista



Ralston



Westside

# Scholar Profiles



*"I joined Avenue Scholars to get an early look at what I could do after high school as far as education, and I also joined because I wanted to participate in more business outreach opportunities for the future."*

**Jessica A. | High School Scholar**



*"I am grateful to be part of the Avenue Scholars program. It has been a big help for me, especially with my career. My coach, Tom, has been really supportive. I didn't know what to do when I got laid off from my last job. Tom helped me find places to work, and since my major is business, we looked at banks. I was able to find a bank that was hiring and got the job! I'm really thankful because I was lost on what to do next."*

**Atia S. | Career Services Scholar**



*"Avenue Scholars carried me through a time of questioning and helped guide me into my career."*

**Daejon C. | Alumni**

# Business Partners

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

## CAREER AWARENESS/ EXPLORATION

Boot camps and Career Awareness experiences provide Scholars with invaluable opportunities to explore and learn about their desired career paths, develop essential skills, and connect with professionals in their fields of interest.

## 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.

## INTERNSHIPS

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 the high school level offering work-based learning experiences to seniors in the greater metro area.

**Avenue Scholars began the 2024 program year with 135 business partners in the Greater Omaha Metro Area.**

# Board of Directors & Staff

## Board of Directors

**Susie Buffett**  
*Chairperson*

**Ken Bird, Ed.D.**  
*Director*

**Mark Haner**  
*Director*

**David LeCureux**  
*Director*

**Matt Ray**  
*Director*

**Calvin Sisson**  
*Director*

**Katie Weitz, Ph.D.**  
*Director*

**Lindsay Decker**  
*CEO*

## Organizational & Program Administration

**Lindsay Decker**  
*CEO*

**Catie Dagle**  
*Chief Program & People Officer*

**Joey Felici**  
*Vice President of Development*

**Rick Painter**  
*Sr. Director of Career Services & Support*

**Michael Johnson**  
*Director of Program Initiatives*

**Tina Acevedo**  
*Director of Communications*

**Kristy Preuss**  
*Executive Assistant & Admin Services Manager*

**Sheree Haynie**  
*Program & Administrative Services Coordinator*

**Elijah Minturn**  
*Intern*

## High School Team

**Terrence Gillian**  
*Team Lead*  
*Omaha NW Career Coach*

**Marcus Manley**  
*Team Lead*  
*Millard North Career Coach*

**Jose Almanza**  
*Omaha Bryan Career Coach*

**Marquita Lambert**  
*Millard South Career Coach*

**Beth Leach**  
*Westside Career Coach*

**Lauren McGlohn**  
*Papillion La Vista Career Coach*

**Tom Prescott**  
*Ralston Career Coach*

**Canei Rodriquez**  
*Omaha Benson Career Coach*

**Jordyn Smith**  
*Blair Career Coach*

**Fred Starks**  
*Omaha North Career Coach*

**Antione Curtis**  
*High School Program Assistant*

**Lauren Linton**  
*High School Program Assistant*

## Career Services Team

**Tonya Fairgood**  
*Team Lead*  
*Career Services Coach*

**Dan Corral**  
*Career Services Coach*

**Steve Johnston**  
*Career Services Coach*

**Tom Robertson**  
*Career Services Coach*

**Anthony Tate**  
*Career Services Coach*

## Business Outreach Team

**Audrey Gustin**  
*Team Lead*  
*Business Relations Manager*

## Community Resource Team

**Ashley Knott**  
*Team Lead*  
*Community Resource Manager*

## 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.



To support our mission, please  
consider a donation today!



**AVENUE SCHOLARS**

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