FOREWORD

AWARD RECIPIENTS

HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLAR STORIES

NCPA END OF THE YEAR TRIP TO CHICAGO

SUPPORT FOR NCPA SCHOLARS

COLLEGE SCHOLAR STORY

NCPA ALUMNI—WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA–LINCOLN
Amber Williams, Ed.D., Assistant Vice Chancellor of Academic Services & Enrollment Management

Moises Padilla, Director

GRAND ISLAND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
2124 N Lafayette Ave,
Grand Island, NE 68803
Principal: Jeff Gilbertson

OMAHA NORTH HIGH MAGNET SCHOOL
4410 N. 36th Street
Omaha, NE 68111
Principal: Gene Hayes

OMAHA SOUTH HIGH MAGNET SCHOOL
4519 S. 24th Street
Omaha, NE 68107
Principal: Ruben Cano

WINNEBAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL
202 Osborne Street
Winnebago, NE 68071
Superintendent: Dan Fehringer
Assistant Superintendent: Cheryl Burrell

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP
Dr. Cynthia Gooch-Grayson, MCC Associate Vice President

A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

NCPA—which closes the gap between recruitment and retention of first-generation students from low-income families—represents the future of higher education. It’s humbling to serve as the leader of a program that has the opportunity to directly impact the lives of so many scholars and their families. Our scholars and their families are strong and proud. I am looking forward to this upcoming year, which comes with even more opportunities to provide support, both personal and academic, to our young scholars.

MOISES PADILLA, M.S.
Director of the Nebraska College Preparatory Academy

FOREWORD

Since 2006, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has provided counselors, teachers and other staff the opportunity to work with talented low-income first-generation students at Grand Island Public High School and, since 2008, Omaha North High Magnet School. In 2017 we expanded into Winnebago and Omaha South Magnet High Schools. This year, NCPA welcomed a new director, Moises Padilla. As director of the academy, Padilla will be responsible for daily NCPA operations, and the development, implementation and assessment of a strategic plan that supports the academic and social success of participating students. As a first-generation college graduate and an immigrant from Mexico, Mois is passionate about providing support to help young scholars.

As our enrollment grows, we remain committed to maintaining our individualized approach to education and support. We are proud of the many accomplishments of our high school scholars, some of which include having an average ACT that exceeds the national average by almost two points and a 3.66 cumulative grade point average.

This year, to further support our scholars, we transitioned from traditional mental health counseling to Solution-Focused Based Therapy (SFBT), which concentrates on finding solutions more quickly than traditional forms of therapy by focusing on the present time and exploring one’s hope for the future to find resolutions.

The Trenchard Foundation Institute of Excellence (TFIOE), NCPA’s college retention program, is welcoming 33 first-year scholars this year, and they will be joining 79 sophomores, juniors and seniors. In the 2018-2019 school year, NCPA graduated 22 students from Nebraska, taking our total graduated scholars up to 79. In May, 80 high school scholars made a trip to Chicago, where they had opportunities to build relationships across NCPC high schools, investigate future careers, connect with UNL alumni and gain new cultural experiences. I invite you to read more about the trip on pages 12-13 of this report.

As NCPA continues to grow and expand, we look forward to sharing their success in next year’s report.

Thank you again for your continued support of the Nebraska College Preparatory Academy.

AMBER WILLIAMS, ED.D.
Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic Services & Enrollment Management
Each year, the school year culminates with a recognition reception, which brings together scholars, their families and educators, to highlight and celebrate the year’s accomplishments.

The receptions at Omaha North and Grand Island include a Senior Showcase, where graduating seniors present their capstone research project. All NCPA scholars must complete a capstone project their senior year to successfully complete the NCPA high school component. The scholars showcase their projects, which paves the way for their next step of collegiate thinking and research. This year’s research topics included cultural and gender issues, literature, history, science and health. Omaha South scholars will complete the capstone component beginning in 2020.

In addition, younger NCPA scholars, as well as high school and middle school teachers are recognized for their hard work and contributions. We are pleased to recognize the 2019 award winners.

WINNEBAGO PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL
Freshman Recognition Award: Kelsi Decora
Sophomore Recognition Award: Zeriah George
Junior Recognition Award: Ricky Suarez
Pillar of Excellence Award: Daulyn Zagurski
Middle School Educator of the Year: Daniela Gant
High School Educator of the Year: Jami Pixler
Mentor Recognition Award: Treivan Bear

GRAND ISLAND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Freshman Award: Anne Martinez
Sophomore Award: Monica Samiego
Junior Award: Raul Ramirez-Galindo
Pillar of Excellence Award: Osvaldo Palma Vargas
Middle School Educator of the Year: Jeffrey Westerby
Certificate of Appreciation: Larry Uhing

OMAHA NORTH HIGH MAGNET SCHOOL
Freshman Award: Alex Gomez-Cazares
Sophomore Award: Dylan Vaughn
Junior Award: Deisyre McGhee
Pillar of Excellence Award: Logan Hudnall
Middle School Educator of the Year: Matthew Moore
High School Educator of the Year: Sheila Connor and Bryson Wiser

OMAHA SOUTH HIGH MAGNET SCHOOL
Scholar Award: Brandon Monarrez Granillo
Scholar Award: Belen Madera
Scholar Award: Angie Gomez-Job
Scholar Award: Anette Jimenez-Sanchez
Scholar Award: Dakota Harris
Scholar Award: Dismas Nsabiyumva
College Mentor Award: Valerie Ontiveros
Middle School Educator of the Year: Jenny Maddock
High School Educator of the Year: Lonnie Moore
Going into his senior year of high school, Samuel Aguilera-Robledo is on the track team, plays the trombone in the band and was named to the National Honor Society. Despite his busy schedule Samuel makes NCPA a priority because to him, NCPA is an investment of his time that is more than just the money for college. NCPA staff members have noticed that no matter how busy he is, Samuel always has time to help out those around him.

Samuel is a life-long outdoor enthusiast. Growing up he loved Steve Irwin and shows like “Go, Diego, Go”, and exploring nature. Because of this early interest, he plans to major in fisheries and wildlife in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Nebraska. It’s a perfect major for Samuel because he can’t imagine a career where he sits at a desk all day—he’d rather be outside.

Going to college is part of Samuel’s plan for his life, but college didn’t always seem attainable. When he was seven, his dad was deported, and his mom was working two jobs just to try to keep their family afloat. Now that he has access to a college education, Samuel’s mom couldn’t be more grateful for NCPA. She has seen the effect it has had on him, and the motivation and passion it has given him. NCPA has allowed both Samuel and his mom to dream of a bright future for him.

While Samuel is grateful for the financial aspect of NCPA, other aspects of NCPA have impacted him just as much. To him, NCPA is worth the investment of his time because of the guidance and support he receives from NCPA.

During his junior year of high school, NCPA was an important resource for Samuel as he was beginning to think about college and needed advice about things like taking the ACT. More than anything though, NCPA has shown Samuel the value of relationships. He said that the most important thing NCPA has taught him by far is how important it is to have good people in his life.

Shauntée Mims is a varsity cheerleader, student council member, Black Student Leadership Council member and senior editor and staff photographer of the yearbook. She plans to major in Early Inclusive Childhood Education, so that she can become a special education teacher.

Shauntée became interested in being a special education teacher because she is always looking out for others, and it’s important to her to be there for people around her. As an only child living with her grandparents, she started to notice her neighbor with severe autism as he learned and was able to thrive with the right guidance. She wants to help people understand that children with autism often just need some extra assistance, rather than to be excluded from activities that other children get to experience.

Shauntée Mims has made her realize that sometimes she is too hard on herself. “I don’t always recognize all the good that I have done. NCPA makes us take a step back and realize all the accomplishments that we have made,” she said.

“NCPA has made me a better and more confident person.”
Growing up, Bryan Gomez saw himself as too shy to ever be a leader. Bryan credits NCPA with helping him to break out of that shell and see his own potential. Besides NCPA, Bryan is involved in Creighton Classic Upward Bound and National Honor Society and in his free time, he volunteers in his community. He is driven determined and ready to contribute to society.

After he graduates from high school, Bryan is considering majoring in mechanical engineering so he can design, produce and operate machinery. Bryan chose his major because he hopes to use the skills he would gain as a mechanical engineer to create innovations that will improve the environment and his community. Bryan was selected as an NCPA ambassador for the 2018-2019 school year. The new responsibilities he had in this role helped him realize his ability to be a leader. Through his interactions with his peers while organizing NCPA events he discovered his own brand of leadership centering around communication and relationships.

"NCPA transformed me from being a timid student to an open and courageous scholar. It has opened my mind up to the many possibilities that are out there after high school. The knowledge I have gained in the program enabled me to pursue my dreams. It has helped me to develop a stronger character, to be a better leader and it boosted my confidence up to a level I never imagined I would get to."

Like many people who have participated in the program, Bryan considers NCPA to be his second family. And as family, Bryan said, “We support, care and appreciate each other.” Bryan’s parents feel the same way. “We see NCPA as part of our family and we truly appreciate everything they have done for us. When we participate in family gatherings, the NCPA staff treat us with so much respect and kindness,” they said.

Despite everything he has accomplished, Bryan is just getting started. His everyday actions are guided by the Pillars of Excellence—in and out of the classroom. He is working hard to graduate with honors, attend the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, get a degree in mechanical engineering and give back to his community.

When Daelyn Zagurski discovered her passion for protecting the planet, it was like something in her switched. She was doing research for a school paper, but even after the paper was turned in, she kept wanting to learn more and more on her own, even watching documentaries about environmental issues. That passion has shaped who she is today, and it has also shaped her dreams for the future of working in wildlife rehabilitation or for an environmental conservation agency.

Daelyn doesn’t keep this passion to herself. “Everyone that knows me knows that I am forever committed to the environment,” she said.

To achieve her goals, Daelyn plans to double major in pre-veterinary studies and biology this fall at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. After college she is considering furthering her education and earning a master's degree in biology and continuing on to veterinary school.

“I simply want to help in restoring biodiversity in the world, reducing plastic pollution, and setting forth ideas to clean our environment, even if my duty is something small.”

NCPA played an invaluable role in Daelyn’s success in high school. NCPA gave Daelyn the motivation she needed to work her hardest in classes and apply herself every day. Daelyn says that NCPA changed her life by providing her with a vision of her future that included a college education without the worry of debt. The Pillars of Excellence are a part of her life now, and she credits combining them with her passion for shaping her as a person.

Furthermore, NCPA provided Daelyn with a community and taught her about the importance of asking for help.

“The most important thing that I’ve learned by being in NCPA is that a support system is necessary. I always thought that I could do things on my own, but after being in NCPA, I realized that the people they put there to help us are people that I actually needed in my life to help and support me when I need them to.”

Daelyn’s family has noticed she is more positive about her future since joining NCPA, and Daelyn noted that because of the support from NCPA she feels ready for the big transition from high school to college.

“Not only does NCPA provide helpful staff to guide students along the way, but NCPA provides you with friendship and help as you transfer over to college.”
In May, Nebraska College Preparatory Academy (NCPA) scholars loaded into buses to travel more than eight hours to Chicago for the annual end-of-the-year trip.

The trip to Chicago was NCPA’s ninth trip of its kind. The tradition started in 2011 when scholars and staff visited Kansas City, and the yearly trip continues to provide a unique type of education to NCPA scholars that only traveling can.

"Many high schools provide trips for their students, but they are not always affordable for students and their families," said Moises Padilla, NCPA director. "The end of the year trip is a reward for students who have put in the hard work to meet the NCPA’s rigorous standards. It also provides each scholar an opportunity to connect with UNL alumni who could serve as role models, mentors and future employers—and gives them exposure to the culture and attractions of a major American city.

"The trip helps make students aware of opportunities they didn’t realize they had, one of NCPA’s goals."

The Chicago trip was the first time some NCPA scholars have left Nebraska. After a rigorous school year, many of the scholars were ready for a break from academics and excited for an adventure in a new city.

Omaha South sophomore Anastasia Martinez was ready for something new. "I was really excited to get a new feel of Chicago. I’ve never been here before. I’ve been kind of stuck in Omaha," she said.

Scholars met with Nebraska alumni who live or work in the Chicago area and visited business and cultural sites. They learned about marketing and consulting from a firm called Accenture, were introduced to the business’s various industries and toured their Innovation Center.

The high schoolers spent their time in Chicago visiting popular attractions as a way of exploring interests and passions and connecting them to potential future academic careers. They saw the best views the city has to offer by touring the Skydeck of Willis Tower and Chicago’s 360 view. They checked out their reflections in the Cloud Gate sculpture at Millennium Park and visited the Shedd Aquarium, where many of them got up close and personal with the animals, touching stingrays and reptiles. The scholars ate like the locals, indulging in the famous deep-dish pizza from Giordano’s.

"It was pretty amazing. We got to walk around like we were one of them and we got to go sightseeing," Grand Island Senior High scholar Matthew Ford said.

The academy also connected with Nebraska alumni at a special panel and dinner. The panelists, who worked in fields from finance to journalism, shared stories about the challenges of college and encouraged the scholars to be authentic to themselves and to take risks.

NCPA staff said the most important aspect of the trip was the opportunity for scholars to build and strengthen relationships. Scholars can’t always meet with scholars from the other partner schools during the school year. The trip gives them an opportunity to bond with their peers, as well as with NCPA staff and mentors.

College mentors, who are part of the Trenchard Foundation Institute of Excellence, attended the trip and helped build community among the high school scholars. Mentorship is an important facet of NCPA because it provides professional socialization and personal support to facilitate scholars’ path for success. NCPA scholars have the opportunity to work one-on-one with high school students to guide them through the program and show them how to be successful in college.

"It was wonderful for me to watch the students interact with the alumni because they want to be successful. They have these dreams and aspirations, but to see people accomplish many of the goals they possibly have is inspiring to them," NCPA Director Moises Padilla said.

"The trip helps make students aware of opportunities they didn’t realize they had, one of NCPA’s goals."
As more NCPA scholars attend college at Nebraska, more are joining the mentor program. “I am excited to be able to connect with other scholars, and give back to our program in this manner,” said a mentor and current TFIOE scholar. Seeing someone who was an NCPA high school scholar act as a mentor to them allows mentees to have confidence that they too can have a successful experience in college.

The mentees are empowered by the guidance from their mentors, and mentoring is empowering for the mentors as well. They receive monthly training that allows them to grow and learn, and are able to connect with the other mentors and the NCPA staff members in charge of the Mentor Program. These relationships are important to the mentees, as is the opportunity to be an example to their mentees. “Being a college student while also being a resource and role model for a high school student is a big advantage of being a mentor,” explained a mentor.

“The NCPA Mentor Program makes the students feel heard and appreciated. I can tell this makes them feel comfortable and empowered within NCPA—which is amazing.”
Lado Yezinai doesn’t even like to think about what his life would be like right now if it weren’t for NCPA. Lado was born in Sudan, and his family moved around quite a bit when he was growing up. They lived in Sudan, Egypt, Pennsylvania and Omaha, Neb., before Grand Island became their home. At Grand Island Senior High, Lado’s selection into NCPA changed his life forever. The summer before starting college, Lado worked in a beef plant in Grand Island. The job was physically demanding, and Lado remembers how that type of work inhibited his mental curiosity and growth. That experience in the meat plant is a driving force for Lado today whenever his classes are particularly challenging. He knows a college education is what is standing between him and a job like the one he had that summer. Because of NCPA, Lado can envision a future where he has a college degree and a job he enjoys. Lado dreams of travelling, and one day he wants to go back to Africa to see his homeland again.

Lado is a hard-working psychology major, and is also a part of the African Student Association on campus because it is important to him to keep in touch with his African family on campus. Lado says that during his freshman year he mostly kept to himself once classes were done for the day. NCPA Retention Coordinator Dema Curtis encouraged Lado to find things to get involved in on campus, or go to school-sponsored events. Lado points to Dema’s encouragement as just one example of the support he receives from NCPA. His encouragement to get involved has made the difference in Lado’s college experience, as he has met many of his friends from school events and groups.

Lado isn’t only grateful to NCPA for his own sake. He knows that paying for college would’ve been an enormous financial burden on his family, if not an impossible one. Lado is looking forward to when his younger brother gets to the point where he can come to him for advice about going to college, and is grateful he can be that kind of role model for his sibling.

NCPA requires dedication and hard work, but to Lado it has been worth every second. “I have everything to gain and nothing to lose by putting in the dedication to get my degree,” he said.

“The best part of NCPA is that it is more than the money aspect of it. The program goes beyond just paying for students to go to college. We have seminars that teach us things some classes don’t. We have lessons on how to build our resumes, how to handle the stress of college and everyday life and we visit businesses and local companies to see how they operate. NCPA has shown me how to write the chapters to a success story.”

HONORS & AWARDS
- Accepted into Glenn Korff School of Music for Vocal Performance
- Accepted into Johnny Carson School of Theater (3 scholars)
- Charlotte Kramer Foreign Study Scholarship Recipient
- College of Business Honors Academy
- Gilman Study Abroad Scholarship Recipient (4 scholars)
- Graduated with Distinction (3 scholars)
- Graduated with High Distinction
- Named a Chancellor’s Scholar
- Named to Franco’s List for character and integrity (2 scholars)
- Named a Harvard Public Affairs Fellow
- Named McNair Scholars (5 scholars)
- Romulo Soldérriva Award for Production Recipient
- Selected for Cornhusker Marching Band
- Undergraduate Levine Diversity Award Recipient
- University Honors Program (7 scholars)
- Graduate with Distinction
- W.E.B. Du Bois Academic Honorary (5 scholars)

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS LEADERSHIP ROLES AND INVOLVEMENT
- Ambassador – College of Arts & Sciences (3 scholars)
- Ambassador – College of Education & Human Sciences
- ASUN Student Government
- Football Team Member
- NASPA Undergraduate Fellow
- Marching Band Academic Honorary
- Marching Band Section Leader
- New Student Enrollment Leader
- President – African Peoples Union
- President – Phi Mu sorority
- President – Selleck Residence Hall Council
- President – Sigma Lambda Beta fraternity (4 scholars)
- President – Sustain UNL
- President – Lambda Theta Nu
- President – Lutheran Center
- President – Knoll Residence Hall
- Residence Hall Assistant
- Outstanding Actress – Johnny Carson School
- Technical Director – Theatrix
- Track and Field Team Member
Reina Sebastian doesn’t take education for granted. Neither of her parents were able to make it to high school; they had to quit so they could stay home and help support their families. Now Reina is in her second year of Occupational Therapy school at the University of South Dakota. She is a graduate of Grand Island Senior High and holds two bachelor’s degrees from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

The small village in Guatemala where Reina’s parents grew up had a unique dialect, so when they left Guatemala to come to the U.S., they had to learn Spanish and also deal with the English language barrier. Their sacrifices motivate Reina. “It is because of their decision to leave their families in search of better opportunities in a country they knew very little about, that I have been able to make it as far as I have,” she said.

Reina has always dreamed of going to college to make her parents proud. Being chosen for NCFA was the moment that dream became a reality for her. NCFA was there for her and her family when they were trying to figure out how the FAFSA works, and they were there for her when she was applying for grad school.

“Attending college was important to me because being the oldest sibling, I knew I had to be the example for my younger siblings. Now that my sister and I have both graduated from college, with the help of NCFA, college is no longer just a dream for my younger siblings and cousins, it’s something we view as a possibility that can be achieved.”

Reina’s goal was to attend graduate school for occupational therapy after college, and now she is in her second year. She first became interested in occupational therapy when she attended therapy sessions with her brother. She remembers falling in love with the occupation. Now she wants to work with children with special needs, and Latino families to bridge the language barrier between patients and occupational therapists.

“There were multiple times when I reconsidered my career path because I felt I wasn’t good enough or smart enough. When classes started to become more difficult, such as anatomy, I would reach a point where I was ready to give up. But NCFA was always there supporting me and reminding me how far I had come. They helped push me through the negative thoughts and instilled confidence in me. I am definitely more confident in myself now because NCFA challenged me and pushed me beyond what I thought was my full potential.”