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The University of Nebraska's Virtual Scholars Pilot Program ***Making quality online learning accessible to more Nebraska students.***

Under Governor Heineman's leadership, Nebraska is making progress in expanding access to high-quality education to more students via the Web. The Governor is committed to leveraging online learning to build a higher level of educational attainment in Nebraska and create a more competitive knowledge-based economy for the state – a goal shared by the University of Nebraska. With more than 80 years of distance education experience, the University is pleased to be in a position to help advance the Governor's vision for a Nebraska Virtual School.

To more aggressively promote online learning in the state, the Governor has announced a Nebraska Virtual Partnership between the Nebraska Department of Education, Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council, University of Nebraska and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications. The partnership is supported by the P-16 Initiative, chaired by the Governor and whose co-chairs, including Sen. Greg Adams, Education Commissioner Roger Breed, NU President James B. Milliken and EducationQuest CEO Liz Koop, have provided support and leadership in increasing student success in Nebraska.

According to the Virtual Partnership's Memorandum of Agreement, partners will work toward a number of goals, including:

- Establishing a statewide virtual/digital education initiative.
- Developing a plan and budget for state support of online high school courses in order to make opportunities available to all Nebraska high school students, with an emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), Advanced Placement, and other courses unavailable in rural and other high schools.
- Establishing a single statewide virtual education resources website.
- Organizing content and professional development and enhancing statewide equity of access to virtual education opportunities.
- Promoting digital education resources and, where necessary, promoting policy reform to enhance and sustain virtual education in Nebraska.
- Leveraging existing resources in Nebraska to promote high quality and cost-effectiveness.

To help kick off the Virtual Partnership, the University of Nebraska has announced the launch of the NU Virtual Scholars pilot program.



What is the goal of the pilot program? The project extends the benefits of high-quality online learning to more high school students in Nebraska – particularly those who may not otherwise have access to rigorous STEM courses. Ultimately, the greater the access to quality education that students have, the more prepared they will be to enter college, earn their degree and contribute to their communities and Nebraska’s knowledge economy.

How will it work? The University of Nebraska will offer 50 free course enrollments – including all course fees and books – in the Independent Study High School at UNL to high schools across Nebraska on a competitive application basis. A school may apply for one course enrollment for one student or multiple enrollments for multiple students. Applications may be for fall 2011 or spring 2012; schools may apply beginning Aug. 15, 2011, by accessing the application on the Independent Study High School’s website: highschool.unl.edu. Applications will be accepted through Sept. 2, 2011.

How will winners be decided? Schools may apply for any of the approximately 100 core, AP and elective courses offered by the Independent High School. All applications will be considered, with priority given to proposals:

- For courses in the STEM fields.
- For a student who is a first-time user of Independent Study High School courses.
- From schools located in a rural area or serving a high number of traditionally under-represented students.
- That extend the curriculum offerings of a school.
- From schools that also propose on-site staff support.

All accredited high schools in Nebraska may apply. Academic credit will be issued by the Independent Study High School and will be transferred to the school upon successful completion of the course.

About the Independent Study High School

Fully accredited by state, national and international agencies, the Independent Study High School was founded in 1929 with the vision that all students should have access to a high-quality education regardless of their geographic location. The school now serves more than 300 Nebraska students, and more than 2,200 worldwide in a flexible, asynchronous environment. ISHS fills a critical gap in education in Nebraska, for schools unable to provide AP courses or certain high-level math or science courses, or whose students have conflicts with their schedules. The University hopes to grow enrollment in ISHS in part by introducing more schools to the program through the Virtual Scholars initiative.