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A Report by the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Nebraska's
Coordinating Commission
for
Postsecondary Education
CCPE

Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls

Off-campus and Distance Education in Nebraska
2008 - 2009

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Delivering Courses Beyond Campus Walls
Highlights of the Report
2008-09

What is distance delivery?

- Traditional delivery—instructor and students are in the same time and place away from the campus; for example, a face-to-face class in a different town or a location in the community other than the campus.

- Synchronous delivery—instructor and students are in the same time, but not the same place; for example, two-way interactive video, where the instructor is in one location, often on the campus with students in a classroom, and delivers the course at the same time by video to other students at a "receiving" site or sites.

- Asynchronous delivery—instructor and students are in a different time and place; for example, a course on CD-ROM or an online course where students work on their own and there is no specified time for the class as a whole to have contact with the instructor.

Which Nebraska institutions offer courses at distance?

- All six community colleges, the three state colleges, and the University of Nebraska campuses offer courses at distance (Table I). The data reflect all courses offered at a location other than a main campus or a branch campus.

- Overall, the number of courses offered at distance increased by 5.5% from 2007-08. All three sectors reported increases in 2008-09, although some institutions experienced declines.

  o The university increased their offerings by 15%; while the number of courses at UNMC was down, UNK and UNO increased the number of courses by 35% and 18%, respectively. NCTA more than doubled their offerings, with all but one course delivered asynchronously.

  o The state colleges increased their offerings by 1%, with small increases at PSC and WSC.

- The number of distance courses at the community colleges increased by almost 4%. Four of the six colleges experienced increases with declines at MCC and NECC.

  - The number of courses reported by WNCC in traditional delivery has varied over the years. In 2006-07 WNCC reported very large numbers of courses in business and information technology in Sidney, primarily for Cabela's employees. There were almost none of these courses reported in 2007-08, but a larger number was again reported in 2008-09.

  - Except for WNCC, all community colleges increased the number of asynchronous courses, some significantly. CCC, for example, increased their offerings by 55% (an additional 164 courses).

  - The number of courses offered by traditional delivery at MCC appears high because the college has three education centers that are not considered branch campuses but enroll large numbers of students.

- Some increases in course offerings are due to one credit workshops and other training opportunities that may be a response to the slow economy and the resulting demand for fast retraining by unemployed workers.

What is the *most popular method of delivery?*

- When the Commission first collected this information in the early 1990s, traditional delivery was the primary method of reaching students who could not be present on campus. Synchronous delivery consisted of a few two-way interactive video courses and asynchronous delivery was mainly pre-recorded audio and video courses.

- Today asynchronous delivery is the most popular delivery mechanism in all three sectors, while synchronous is the least-used (Figure I). The community colleges, however, offer over 450 courses (8% of their total) synchronously. This larger number is due, in part, to dual enrollment courses offered to high school students at their high school building. The ability of colleges to offer synchronous courses to K-12 schools was enhanced by the passage of LB1208 in 2006. The bill provided for improvement in connectivity state-wide and offered incentives for K-12 schools to participate in distance delivery.

- The popularity of asynchronous courses is illustrated in Graph I. Asynchronous delivery surpassed synchronous delivery in 2000-01 and traditional delivery in 2004-05. The number continues to climb dramatically, with an increase of almost 18% between 2007-08 and 2008-09.

- The number of traditional delivery courses has declined steadily since 2005-06.

- The figure for synchronous courses rebounded slightly in 2007-08, but in 2008-09 reached the lowest number reported since the Commission began counting synchronous courses.

- Some of the increase in asynchronous delivery and decline in traditional delivery might be attributed to institutional enrollment policies. Traditionally-delivered courses often have a minimum enrollment of 8 or 10 students to ensure that the majority of instructional costs are covered by tuition. If this number isn't reached, the class is cancelled. Asynchronous courses may have a much lower threshold, or even no threshold, resulting in fewer cancellations and, therefore, a higher number of course offerings.

What courses are offered at distance?

- Almost every type of course is offered at distance, including courses requiring hands-on activities such as biology, nursing, and mechanics.

- Most community colleges report liberal arts and sciences courses, including those for academic transfer programs, together in a single category.

- Large numbers of courses were also offered in business, education, health professions, and computer and information sciences.

How many students are served by distance technology?

- In 1998-99, the first year the Commission collected enrollment data, there were 7,512 students (duplicated headcount) enrolled in courses offered either synchronously or asynchronously. Over three times that many were served at distance by traditional delivery (Graph II).

- By 2005-06 the numbers had shifted dramatically as the delivery methods shifted—a trend that continues in 2008-09. The number of students enrolled in asynchronous courses increased from just over 4,400 in 1998 to 97,353 (duplicated headcount) in 2008. And although the number of traditional and synchronous <u>courses</u> declined in 2008-09, the number of students served increased in both delivery modes.

- The total number of students served by some form of distance education was 150,349 (duplicated headcount) in 2008-09 (Table II). This is an 18.3% increase over 2007-08 and is reflected in increases at every institution except WSC and NECC. The latter also reported offering fewer courses.

Are degrees or other awards available entirely by distance technology?
- Awards ranging from certificates at the community college to master's degrees at the university and state colleges are available at distance.

- In 2008-09 the number of awards approached 100. A small number are available utilizing strictly traditional delivery. A greater number are delivered with a combination of distance and traditional delivery. By far, the largest number are delivered entirely by some type of distance delivery technology.

Where are the distance courses offered?
- Most asynchronous courses are available anywhere a student has access to a computer, including his or her home or work place.

- Synchronous and traditionally-delivered courses were once offered in the majority of Nebraska counties, but this number has declined as the popularity of asynchronous courses has increased.

- Most synchronous courses require a location capable of receiving a live transmission from the campus. Many high schools and public buildings have this capability. Some institutions utilize this capability to offer college courses to high school students, especially after the passage of LB1208.

How are high school students served?

- The courses counted in this report are frequently offered for both high school and college credit and are called "dual enrollment" courses. Also included in this report are college courses offered in high schools for which students receive only college credit although they are still enrolled in high school. These are sometimes called "concurrent enrollment" courses.

- Students who live near a college campus or who elect to take an online course can also earn college credit. These students are not generally counted separately and are not reflected in this data.

- In 2006-07 there were 1,123 college courses offered to 9,319 high school students. In 2008-09 both numbers had increased by over 23%. (Table III)

- All sectors increased both the number of courses offered and the number of students served over the period, although there were some declines at individual institutions.

- The largest number of both students and courses was reported by UNO (Graphs III and IV). This can be attributed to a partnership between UNO and the Omaha area high schools by which UNO accepts Advanced Placement courses taught in high schools for college credit.

- UNO also had the greatest increase in *number* of courses and high school students served. The largest *percentage* increase was reported by Western Nebraska Community College with 359 more students served, a 99% increase (Table III, Graph IV).

- Most of the decreases and significant variation from 2006-07 through 2008-09 occurred at the community college level. This is the sector that has historically served the majority of high schools students. Some of the variation might be attributable to the phase-in of LB 1208. The bill required installation of hardware and software that was accomplished in phases, focusing on specific geographic regions over four years. As additional areas became more accessible to the community colleges and the high schools, a natural shifting of course offerings may have occurred.

Note on Data Collection:

- The State of Nebraska's Department of Administrative Services collects the data used in this report each fall. Starting in 2011, the Commission will be collecting the data directly from the institutions. This should improve the ability of the Commission to obtain complete and accurate data.

- Prior to the 2011 data submittal, the Commission intends to review the current data elements, especially in light of changing institutional practices and state-level data needs. Staff will seek input from the institutions in the review process.

TABLE I
Summary of Delivery Methods and Number of Courses
2006-2009

| Institution	2006-07				2007-08				2008-09			
	Synch	Asynch	Tradition	Total	Synch	Asynch	Tradition	Total	Synch	Asynch	Tradition	Total
UNK	27	328	153	508	24	354	7	385	13	487	20	520
UNL	0	513	24	537	0	404	5	409	0	462	4	466
UNMC	106	7	0	113	130	77	4	211	35	89	0	124
UNO	8	165	420	593	8	223	517	748	11	320	555	886
NCTA	1	4	0	5	0	17	0	17	0	39	1	40
University Total	142	1017	597	1756	162	1075	533	1770	59	1397	580	2036
CSC	144	375	58	577	88	439	54	581	73	439	26	538
PSC	0	343	169	512	0	377	141	518	0	383	195	578
WSC	18	198	134	350	15	224	135	374	9	243	123	375
State College Total	162	916	361	1439	103	1040	330	1473	82	1065	344	1491
CCC	52	274	144	470	132	300	252	684	137	464	137	738
MCC	81	1007	1183	2271	50	1140	1488	2678	35	1255	1256	2546
MPCC	73	106	100	279	67	144	83	294	87	185	79	351
NECC	119	220	170	509	143	240	285	668	129	276	227	632
SCC	16	655	63	734	16	772	79	867	9	949	97	1055
WNCC	62	104	703	869	81	153	97	331	62	136	202	400
Community College Total	403	2366	2363	5132	489	2749	2284	5522	459	3265	1998	5722
Grand Total	707	4299	3321	8327	754	4864	3147	8765	600	5727	2922	9249

MCC's Traditional total includes courses offered at Sarpy Center, Fremont Center, and Applied Technology Center.

WNCC's Traditional total includes courses offered at Alliance Center, Sidney Center, Regional West Medical Center, and Cabela's.

FIGURE I
Delivery Modes by Sector
Number of Courses, 2008-2009

University

59
580
1397

State Colleges

82
344
1065

Community Colleges

459
1998
3265

Mode of Delivery
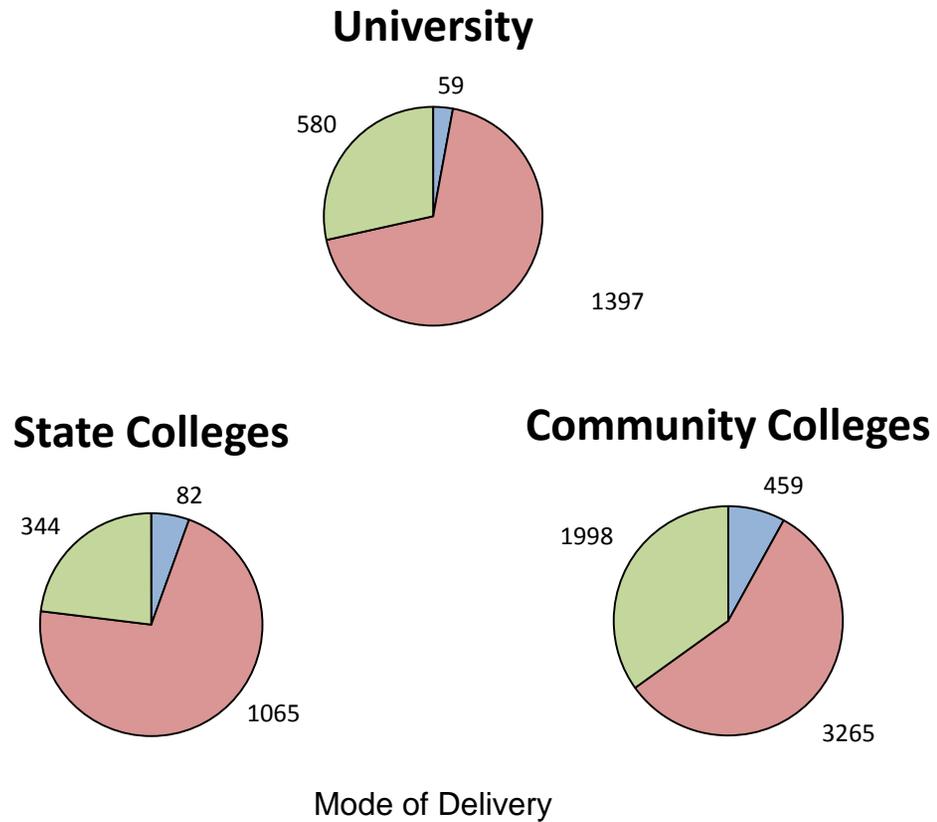
Traditional: Instructor and students are in the same time and same place
Synchronous: Instructor and students are in the same time but separated geographically
Asynchronous: Instructor and students are not in the same time or the same place

GRAPH I

Distance Education Courses Offered
by Nebraska Public Institutions
1997-2009
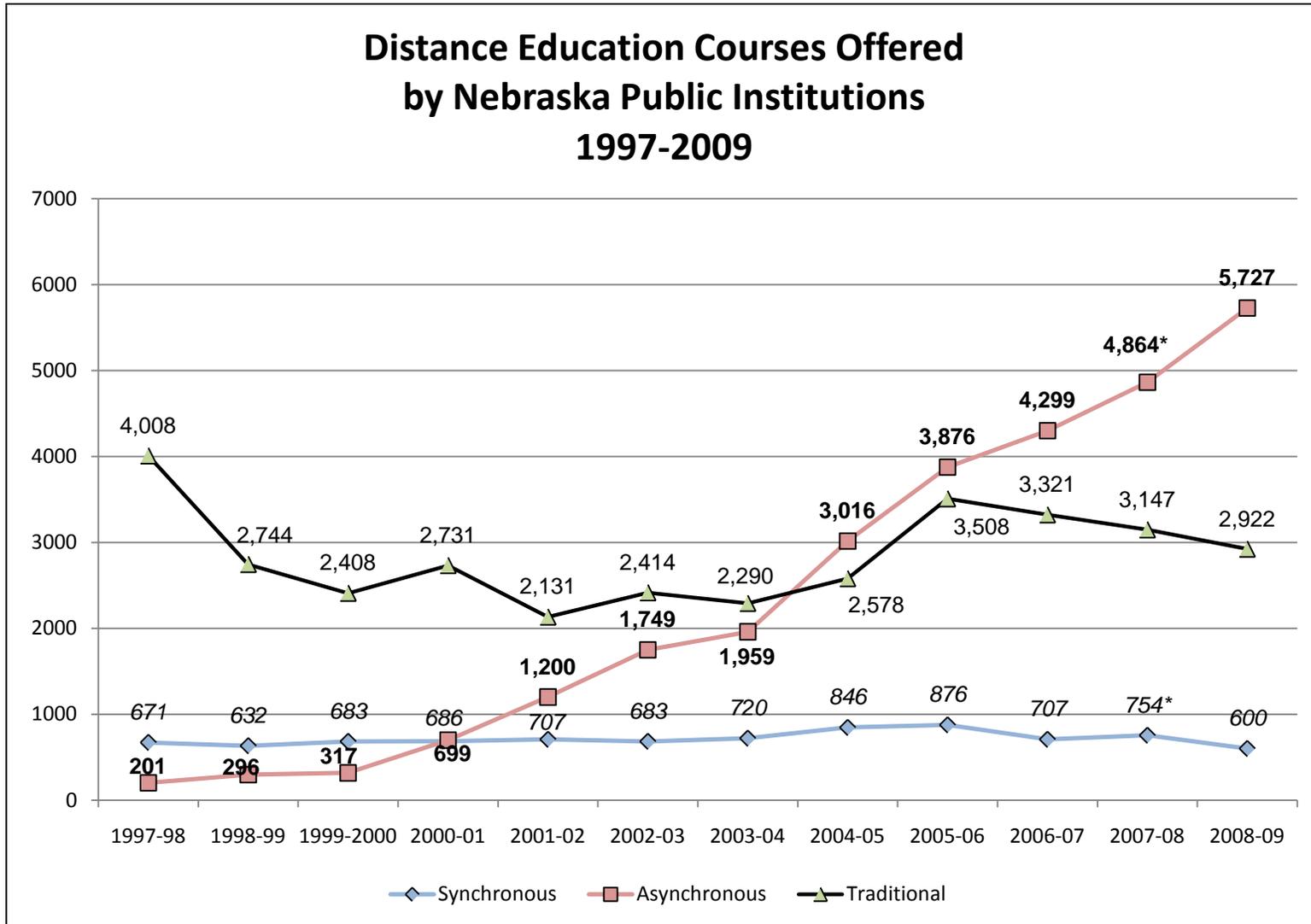
*corrected from previous count

GRAPH II

Distance Education Enrollments in Nebraska
1998-2009

Synchronous values: 4,415 | 10,663 | 5,471 | 5,766 | 5,206 | 6,022 | 6,216 | 6,905 | 5,570 | 5,636 | 11,133

Asynchronous values: 3,097 | 4,256 | 8,354 | 19,620 | 23,375 | 31,283 | 32,572 | 61,640 | 65,729 | 83,070 | 97,353

Traditional values: 25,448 | 34,782 | 32,101 | 30,390 | 26,916 | 27,330 | 47,164 | 41,646 | 41,110 | 32,560 | 41,863
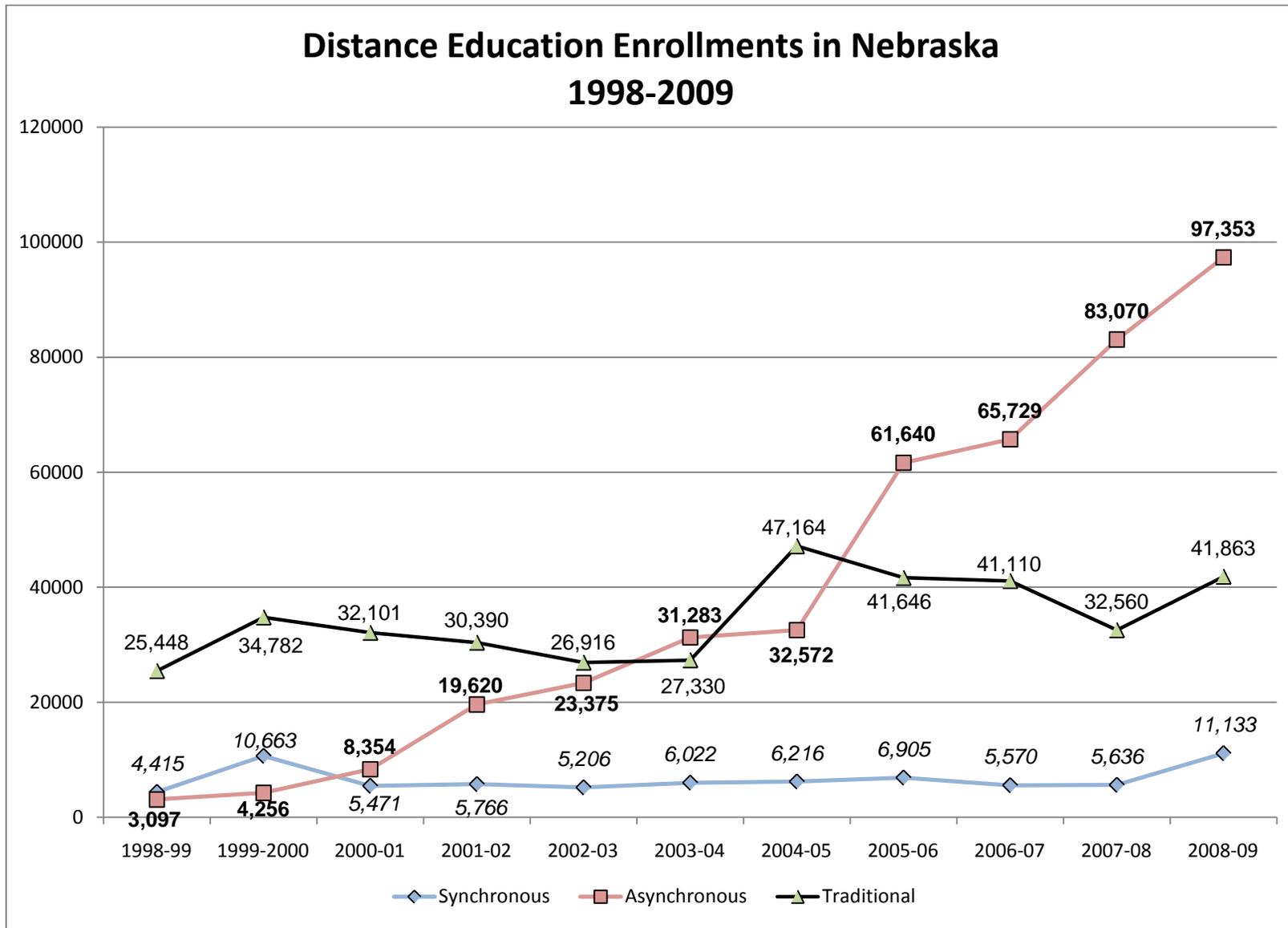
TABLE II
Estimate of the Number of Nebraska Students Served by Distance Learning
(duplicated headcount)
2008-2009

Institution/Sector	Synchronous		Asynchronous	Sub-Total	Traditional	Grand Total
	Sending*	Receiving				
UNK	214	36	7,699	7,949	214	8,163
UNL	0	0	5,741	5,741	30	5,771
UNMC	1,736	1,135	1,349	4,220	0	4,220
UNO	0	105	6,793	6,898	4,501	11,399
NCTA	0	0	219	219	1	220
University Total	1,950	1,276	21,801	25,027	4,746	29,773
CSC	0	546	7,024	7,570	138	7,708
PSC	0	0	9,896	9,896	1,632	11,528
WSC	37	39	3,386	3,462	2,203	5,665
State College Total	37	585	20,306	20,928	3,973	24,901
CCC	1,115	1,405	10,637	13,157	1,707	14,864
MCC	344	154	23,176	23,674	15,617	39,291
MPCC	855	662	2,806	4,323	659	4,982
NECC	919	610	3,745	5,274	2,794	8,068
SCC	15	123	13,002	13,140	1,236	14,376
WNCC	626	457	1,880	2,963	11,131	14,094
Community College Total	3,874	3,411	55,246	62,531	33,144	95,675
Grand Totals	5,861	5,272	97,353	108,486	41,863	150,349

*Some institutions do not report the number of students at sending sites.

TABLE III
Summary of College Courses Offered to High School Students in Nebraska by Institution
2006 – 2009

Institution	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	# Courses	# Students	# Courses	# Students	# Courses	# Students
UNK	12	30	13	29	15	98
UNL	0	0	0	0	0	0
UNMC	0	0	0	0	0	0
UNO	273	2150	370	3072	421	3383
NCTA	0	0	4	38	15	79
University Total	285	2180	387	3139	451	3560
CSC	6	73	3	16	2	33
PSC	98	782	86	691	146	1136
WSC	0	0	0	0	2	15
State College Total	104	855	89	707	150	1184
CCC	125	1233	162	1316	142	1061
MCC	183	1657	239	1863	153	1704
MPCC	94	518	70	325	110	493
NECC	176	1493	234	1452	173	1271
SCC	107	1022	112	1197	133	1471
WNCC	49	361	49	360	76	720
Community College Total	734	6284	866	6513	787	6720
Grand Total	1123	9319	1342	10359	1388	11464

**UNK's 2007-08 data is estimated

GRAPH III

College Courses Offered to High School Students by Institution
2006 - 2009

Legend: 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09
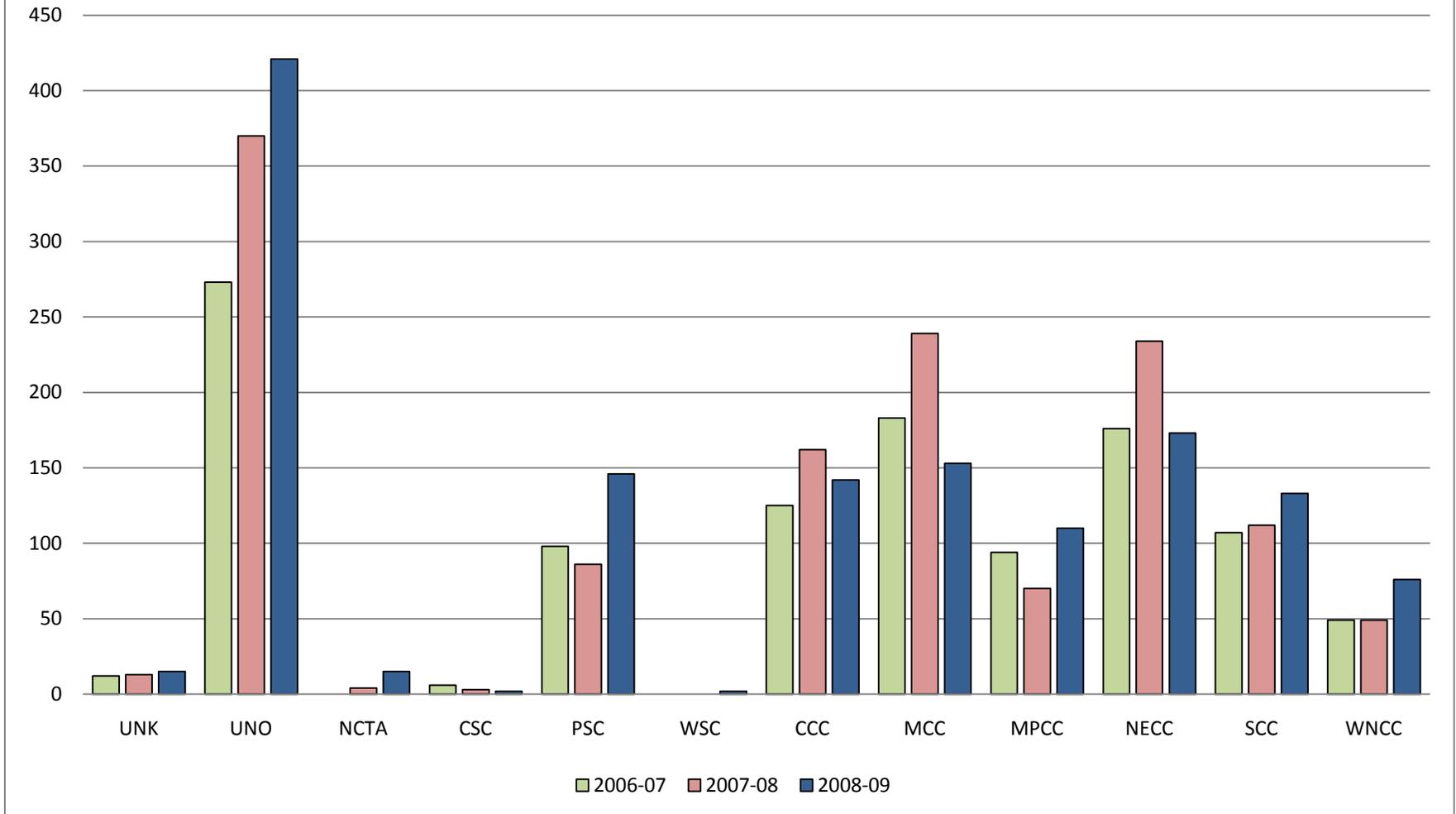
GRAPH IV

High School Students Participating in College Courses by Institution 2006 - 2009

Legend: 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09