



MISSOURI VALLEY

COLLEGE

January 8, 2009

Dr. Robert Stein and Mr. Leroy Wade
Missouri Department of Higher Education
3515 Amazonas Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65109

RE: State Financial Aid Programs at Missouri Valley College

Dr. Stein and Mr. Wade,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information and comments relevant to the Missouri state student financial aid programs. Over the past several years our state aid programs have seen drastic changes; these changes have all been excellent improvements. The most notable change has been the creation of the Access Missouri Program. This program was designed to provide access to students who otherwise would not be able to pursue the higher education they desire and to promote affordability for Missouri residents who attend Missouri institutions. The program works exactly as it was designed to.

Missouri Valley College is a private four-year liberal arts college in Marshall, MO. The College enrolls approximately 1,400 undergraduate students each academic year. During the fall 2008 semester the College awarded just under \$900,000 in state student financial aid and expects to disburse \$1.7 million for the 2008-2009 award year. The aid these students receive is a crucial factor in their ability to pay their educational expenses. Because of the rural location of Missouri Valley College many of these students would be unable to attend another institution if this funding became unavailable.

The statistical data compiled regarding the students who receive state student financial aid confirms that the largest state aid program, the Access Missouri Grant, is working the way it was designed to. It provides access and promotes affordability for those students who need the funding to pursue their desired higher education. Listed below are some of the statistical data elements relating to students receiving funding through Missouri state financial aid programs at Missouri Valley College (MVC) during the fall 2008 semester.

- 856 of 1398 (61%) students enrolled at MVC are Missouri residents.
- 393 of 856 (46%) Missouri residents receive Access Missouri funding.
- 132 of the Access Missouri recipients are entering freshman graduating with a high school class of less than 100 students.
- 154 of 393 (39%) Access Missouri recipients report a total family income of less than \$30,000 on their financial aid application (FAFSA).

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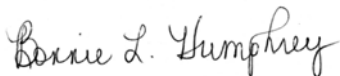
- 127 of 393 (32%) Access Missouri recipients have a calculated EFC of 0 on their financial aid application.
- The average EFC for Access Missouri recipients is 3,190.

The statistic referring to high school graduating class size is a data element worth discussion. Because Missouri Valley College is a small campus we are able to provide a warm, personal environment for our students. Our College takes pride in this ability and we realize that not all schools are able to create this environment, an environment especially needed by students coming from small schools in rural areas. These statistics remind us that these funds are being spent on the students that need the financial help to pay their educational costs.

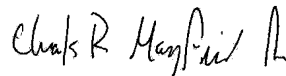
While the public policy for the state student financial aid programs is an excellent policy there is usually some room for improvement in most public policies; this policy is no exception. The one improvement that comes to mind would be an adjustment to the 2.5 GPA requirement for the Access Missouri program. The GPA requirement was established to create an identical academic progress renewal requirement across all state aid programs. If you compare the intent of the Bright Flight scholarship to the Access Missouri Grant they are created as different programs. The Bright Flight scholarships are awarded to the highest achieving students in the state and are not need-based. The Access Missouri Grant is a need-based program and the grants are awarded to the neediest student in the state. These needy students are in many cases first generation students and/or from families that live below poverty levels. Asking these two groups of students to achieve the same GPA to maintain eligibility for the state aid programs seems to be a very unfair approach. A recommendation to reduce the Access Missouri GPA renewal requirement to a 2.0 cumulative GPA would be a good recommendation and would likely be supported by the financial aid community and many legislators.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this subject and thank you for your time. We look forward to seeing the summary document that the MDHE will distribute after all comments are reviewed. We also look forward to public policy discussion at the CBHE meeting in February.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bonnie L. Humphrey
President



Charles R. Mayfield Jr.
Director of Financial Aid