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Letter to the Editor

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Private colleges serve state's neediest

Independent colleges and universities are an incredible value, enrolling nearly 40 percent of Missouri's collegiate population and awarding nearly 50 percent of all degrees annually, including more than half of those in education and health care. Missouri's financial contribution to these degrees is only \$956 (32 percent of the national average) whereas for a public institution degree it is \$34,144 (78 percent of the national average). Equalizing Access Missouri awards (3/31, Opinion) would decrease the \$956 and increase the \$34,144. Is this fiscally responsible?

Many of Missouri's neediest students attend independent institutions, with an average family income lower than for students at public institutions. More minority, first-generation, rural and "at risk" students attend independent colleges than public institutions. Independent students are more likely to earn a degree in four years, with a 40.35 percent graduation rate for independents and 21.8 percent for publics.

Access Missouri serves students and allows them to choose the best institution for their needs. Don't change it.

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