

Access Missouri Talking Points

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The most effective message to lawmakers is your personal story and what state financial aid through Access Missouri means to you. The following points can help support your own story. It is best to be brief, so select one point that supports your story and summarize it in your own words.

Access Missouri is our state's way of ensuring our neediest students are able to attend college.

- Missouri's working and lower-income families spend too much of their household income to send a child to college even with financial aid.
- Access Missouri was designed by financial aid professionals – the people who best know what students need. It provides critical financial assistance to students with demonstrated financial need so they can attend any eligible Missouri college of their choice.
- As designed, Access Missouri provides graduated awards to best meet the need of each individual student. The average award covers only 22 percent of tuition and fees for students attending independent colleges; while the average award to students at public colleges covers 25 percent of tuition and fees.

Now is not the time to turn students away from Missouri colleges and universities.

- The current economy is challenging for all of us, but it is particularly challenging for working families. The average family income of Access Missouri recipients at four-year independent colleges is only \$42,620; while it is \$45,546 for those enrolled at four-year public colleges. In other words, independent college students actually have a lower average family income than their public college counterparts.
- Many students are not going to be able to borrow their way out of this predicament if access to state financial aid is significantly scaled back – or as Gov. Nixon proposes is eliminated altogether for students at independent colleges. Many students are already borrowing the maximum in federally subsidized loans. Private loans are difficult to obtain due to the banking crisis. Cutting financial aid takes students out of classrooms and into unemployment lines.

Missouri shouldn't balance its budget on the backs of its students.

- Access Missouri is doing what it was designed to do – providing access to a higher education for students who have limited financial aid options.
- All of us deserve the chance to obtain a college education. Access Missouri allows students of working families to do just that. Eliminating aid to students based on the type of Missouri college they choose to attend would unfairly deny students with demonstrated financial need access to a college education.
- Missouri lawmakers must commit to protecting Access Missouri so that all eligible Missouri students have access to a college education at the institution of their choice. It's a wise investment into Missouri's most precious resource – its young people. Legislators should remove the sunset provision that would terminate Access Missouri in 2013. Access Missouri is working and should continue.

Access to higher education means better jobs for Missourians and a stronger economic future for Missouri.

- Twenty-two of the 30 fastest growing careers require some post-secondary education.
- Many Access Missouri recipients are people returning to school to advance their careers.
- Limiting access to state financial aid unfairly limits economic opportunities for students from working and lower-income families who seek to realize the dream of a college education.

Independent colleges are an important part of the higher education mix in Missouri. Students attending them should not be penalized for choosing the best school to meet their goals.

- Independent institutions enroll 36 percent of students and grant 47 percent of degrees in Missouri annually.
- Independent colleges play a strong role in training education and healthcare professionals, granting over half of the degrees in these two fields.
- Independent colleges provide a public good with no state subsidy. If the state had to take on the students at Missouri's independent colleges, it would cost some \$700 million annually.