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Colorado State University - Pueblo announces Commitment to Colorado student assistance

DENVER – As part of its role and mission to provide Colorado students with access to higher education, Colorado State University-Pueblo officials announced Thursday a commitment to pay tuition and fees for a significant percentage of full-time Colorado resident undergraduate students beginning in Fall 2011. Colorado Governor Bill Ritter and officials from the Colorado State University System, including Chancellor Joe Blake, CSU-Fort Collins President Tony Frank, and CSU-Pueblo President Joseph Garcia, announced plans to ensure that financial challenges will not prevent any undergraduate Colorado student who is admitted to the university from attending.

CSU-Pueblo's Commitment to Colorado program is a guarantee that admitted full-time, resident undergraduates with a family adjusted gross income of \$50,000 or less who receive a Pell grant will not have to pay tuition or mandatory student fees.

Beginning in Fall 2011, CSU - Pueblo will utilize a variety of federal, state, and institutional funding sources to cover 100 percent of the cost of base tuition and mandatory student fees for full-time Colorado undergraduate students who receive a Pell grant and have a family Adjusted Gross Income of less than \$50,000. This plan would have covered tuition and mandatory student fees for approximately 1,534 full-time CSU – Pueblo students, or more than 36 percent of all CSU-Pueblo full-time resident undergraduates in the current academic year. An estimated 2,862 Colorado undergraduate students annually receive need-based aid at CSU - Pueblo and, of those recipients, approximately 53 percent will qualify for the Commitment to Colorado.

To be eligible, a student must:

- Be admitted to CSU – Pueblo
- Be a Colorado resident for tuition purposes
- Enroll full-time in a fall or spring semester (not summer)
- Complete the required application process to receive College a Opportunity Fund (COF) stipend
- Be pursuing a first bachelor's degree
- Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by June 1, with March 1 being the priority submission deadline for State and Institutional aid
- File a 2011-12 FAFSA and be fully eligible for a federal Pell Grant
- Have no other grant need-based financial assistance that exceeds the cost of tuition and mandatory student fees
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress
- Have attempted no more than 150 credits

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In order to renew the award, a student must submit a new FAFSA annually by the June 1 deadline, receive a Pell grant, and meet the AGI requirements specific to the year for which they are applying.

“Access to a high-quality, affordable higher education is one of the cornerstones of the American Dream. It was the key to my success. It is the key to Colorado’s future, and we need to use that key to keep the doors of opportunity wide open to *all* Coloradans,” said Gov. Bill Ritter. “I applaud Colorado State University for taking a big step in ensuring that higher education is affordable and accessible in Colorado.”

According to CSU-Pueblo President Joseph Garcia, researching the plan brought forth some startling statistics regarding the amount of need among the current population.

“I was struck by the extent of need among our student population after learning that the median family income (AGI) for undergraduate students at CSU - Pueblo who qualify for need based financial aid is \$18,783,” Garcia said. “That fact alone convinced me that our decision to fund this program to insure access was imperative given the increases in tuition the University has had to implement to counter the loss of state funding.”

Garcia said the median family income (AGI) for undergraduate students at CSU–Pueblo who apply for financial aid is \$42,299, which means there is a significant gap between those who need and those who obtain financial assistance. More than 80 percent of the CSU-Pueblo student population receives some form of financial aid. CSU-Pueblo is one of the most diverse institutions in the state with a minority student population of nearly 40 percent.

Given that the average household income for a family of four in Pueblo County (2008) was \$42,005, the University is confident that the \$50,000 limit will help more low and middle income students in our primary service area to believe that their dream of a college degree is attainable.

CSU System Chancellor Joe Blake sees the Commitment to Colorado plan to bolster aid to Colorado resident students as but one part of a systemwide strategic plan to create opportunities for building Colorado’s future and expanding the CSU System’s statewide presence through mutually beneficial partnerships.

At the news conference on Thursday, CSU-Fort Collins also unveiled its Commitment to Colorado today, a separate program targeted at the needs of that campus. More information is available at <http://www.news.colostate.edu/>

Colorado State University - Pueblo is a regional, comprehensive university emphasizing professional, career-oriented, and applied programs. Displaying excellence in teaching, celebrating diversity, and engaging in service and outreach, CSU-Pueblo is distinguished by access, opportunity, and the overall quality of services provided to its students.

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