

Testimony to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education and Steering Committee members of the Missouri Department of Higher Education regarding the coordinated plan for Missouri

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Good afternoon to the members of the coordinating board and other guests in the room.

My name is Karissa Anderson, I am a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University and most recently earned my Master's in Social Work from Saint Louis University. I was previously an education policy intern with The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis and I am now the Manager of Advocacy and Policy Research. You have gathered here today to talk about completion strategies. In my experiences as a low income student, a policy intern, and now a college access professional - I can tell you this for sure...the key to completion for students like myself is adequate funding. This is particularly true for students whose families can't contribute financially. I can talk to you about my personal experience if you like but I would like to share the data as well.

Students who are lower income are told they need to go to public colleges and universities because it's more affordable. People also think that low income students receive full financial aid packages. Well, here in Missouri, the numbers don't add up. For the 2015-2016 school year, the annual cost of attendance at Mizzou is over \$25,000<sup>1</sup>. The maximum publicly funded aid that a low-income student can receive is \$12,775. That means that this year, a low income freshmen at Mizzou will likely face a gap of over \$12,000. This is a gap which they nor

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<sup>1</sup> University of Missouri – Columbia - <http://admissions.missouri.edu/costs-and-aid/costs/index.php>

their parents can possibly pay. Such a student is not eligible to borrow enough from a trustworthy source and even if they could, they would be borrowing over twice the national average. In the 2012-2013 school year, over 178,000<sup>2</sup> students in Missouri were eligible for the federal Pell Grant - the largest indicator of need. Take a look at the math on the infographic I've provided, low-income students cannot afford our state flagship university. The numbers don't add up; the gap is too big and students are faced with the decision not to enroll or they soon find they cannot complete their studies. This is a hit Missouri cannot afford to take.

The states' single need-based aid program, Access Missouri, has consistently seen budget cuts - but the state consistently says we need more college graduates. Of those 178,000 Pell eligible students, Access only has the capacity to serve about 50,000 students. If we want to see Missouri students graduate we must admit them with full funding and continue to fully fund them until degree completion. We must stop gapping the very students our state needs to see graduate. Students cannot complete their degrees if they can't afford them. They cannot access on-campus support services to aid them in their journey if they cannot cover their bill. They cannot achieve their dreams or climb their way out of poverty.

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<sup>2</sup> 2012-2013 Federal Pell Grant Program End-of-Year Report - <http://www2.ed.gov/finaid/prof/resources/data/pell-2012-13/pell-eoy-2012-13.html>