

### By Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman

As Governor, two of my key priorities are the education of our children and the economic vitality of our state. I want to ensure that every child receives a quality K-12 education, the opportunity to attend college at an affordable price and then enter the Nebraska workforce with a quality job.

Recently I travelled with University of Nebraska President James B. Milliken to speak at assemblies at Lincoln Northstar, Omaha South and Grand Island Senior High Schools. We encouraged students to attend college and we talked about how Collegebound Nebraska could help them in that effort.

Collegebound Nebraska is the University of Nebraska's newly expanded financial-aid initiative to help make college more affordable for thousands of Nebraska families. This program will provide free tuition for Pell Grant-eligible students attending any of the University of Nebraska's campuses in Lincoln, Kearney or Omaha. This fall, the program was expanded so that many families who are just beyond Pell Grant eligibility also qualify for free tuition.

Eligibility for Collegebound Nebraska depends on a number of factors including family size and total assets. Generally speaking, a Nebraska family of four with one student in college and an income of \$45,000 or less should qualify for full tuition assistance.

Nebraska has one of the highest high school graduation rates in the country, but our college going rate is barely above average. That needs to change. We can do better.

The world is changing. Innovation is happening faster and faster. The amount of technical information is doubling every two years and by 2010 it is predicted to double every 72 hours.

To compete in a knowledge-based, technology-driven, 21st Century free market economy, every high school student needs at least 2 years, and preferably 4 years, of college. Whether you want to be a welder, an electrician, an auto mechanic, a teacher, a nurse, a computer programmer, a doctor, a lawyer, or a business executive, you need a college education.

As Governor, I encourage every student to attend college and I want college to be affordable for Nebraska families. The Collegebound program will ensure more Nebraska students have access to the tools they need to make higher education a reality, and that's great news for our state.

On many occasions, President Milliken has stated that affordability is the University of Nebraska's highest priority. He is committed to keeping tuition increases as low as possible even in tough economic times.

More importantly, it's about the futures of our students and their opportunities to succeed. Studies show college graduates enjoy a higher quality of life, better jobs, more income, improved health, and greater involvement in community activities.

An educated workforce is good for Nebraska and good for America. It helps attract companies that create higher paying jobs. Increasing Nebraska's college enrollment is critical to the future success of today's students and our continued economic growth as a state. The Collegebound Nebraska program is a great way to provide meaningful assistance.

Cost should not be a barrier to attending college and assistance is available. In addition to the Collegebound Nebraska program, I encourage families to look into the many other funding

## Great news for collegebound Nebraska

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and scholarship options available in our state, including the scholarships available through the Susan T. Buffett Foundation. There are many programs available to make college more affordable.

Like you, I want our students to succeed. I applaud President J.B. Milliken and the University of Nebraska on expanding the financial assistance available to help more high school graduates attend college. President Milliken and I want to make the dream of an affordable college education a reality for Nebraska families and this is a great step in the right direction.

For more information on this program, please visit: [www.collegeboundnebraska.com](http://www.collegeboundnebraska.com).