



April 15, 2015



Dear Governor Inslee and Leaders of the Washington State Legislature:



We are writing to urge you to adopt a final budget that provides additional funds for low income students through the State Need Grant program.



For at least half a century our non-profit independent private colleges have partnered with the State of Washington to become a major source of exceptional higher education opportunity and choice for Washington students. Because of this joint commitment, collectively, our institutions confer 20 percent of the baccalaureate degrees earned each year in the state. This partnership has been built on the principle of equal opportunity for our students as we strive to deliver a rigorous academic program.



We believe that several budget proposals being considered for the next biennium depart from these principles and if adopted, may fundamentally change both the philosophical principle and the nature of the partnership that has served Washington so well.



A central feature of our partnership has been State support for low income students who chose to attend our colleges through the State Need Grant (SNG) and at a level equal to the state's research universities. This award level was established in part because of in the quality of the educational experience our institutions offer and in recognition of the exceptional value proposition our partnership provides to the state.



The 2011 budget adopted by the State moved away from this principle of parity and, due to lack of funding in the past several budgets, over 30% of our students who are eligible for SNG support do not receive it. One proposal being considered for the next biennium budget adds funding to the SNG so more students who are currently eligible could receive financial support and increases award levels for our students but falls significantly short of parity. Another proposal adds no additional funding for the SNG program and, in fact, would reduce awards to our students by over 25%.



We respectfully urge you to fashion a final budget for the State that adds funding to the SNG program to serve more students and that increases award levels for our students with the expressed intention of achieving parity. Including these elements in the budget would be a profound renewal of our long standing partnership in providing higher education opportunities for Washington students.



Thank you for your consideration.




John Bassett, President
Heritage University


George S. Bridges, President
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Roy F. Heynderickx, President
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