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Benedictine University and Westminster College hand out scholarships in Mesa

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Mesa's 3,624 high school graduates last month, 173 — more than 32 percent — were offered college scholarships and grants totaling \$85.7 million, according to the school district. Here is a breakdown:
- Dobson: \$10.2 million
- East Valley Academy: \$5,000
- Mesa: \$10.9 million
- Mountain View: \$20.7 million
- Red Mountain: \$14.3 million
- Skyline: \$8.1 million
- Westwood: \$21.4 million
Source: Mesa Public Schools

By Cathryn Creno
The Republic | azcentral.com
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Three Westwood High School grads and a Mesa Community College student are the first recipients of one-year \$10,000 scholarships to branches of Benedictine University and Westminster College through a new program called Mesa Educates U.

The schools will open in August in downtown Mesa.

The students are Andrew Kuhn and Ben Watson, who will attend Westminster, and Lesly Herrera and Francisco Reyes, who will attend Benedictine. Herrera, Reyes and Watson are 2013 Westwood graduates.

Although five college branches that Mesa recruited to its downtown will be open for fall semester, only Benedictine and Westminster awarded Mesa Educates U Scholarships this summer. The scholarships pay about half of the school's tuition and are available to Mesa residents. Scholarship winners who keep their grades up can renew them for up to four years.

Wilkes University officials say they expect to participate in the program in 2014-15, when the school enrolls undergraduates. It currently offers only graduate-level classes. Albright University officials say they have scholarships worth up to \$5,000 available, but no one has applied for them yet.

The colleges have pledged to give scholarships to at least two new students a year for five years. More information is available at http://www.mesaeducatesu.org.

Upper Iowa University has also opened in Mesa but has not joined the Mesa Educates U Scholarship initiative.

Here is some additional information about the scholarship winners:

Lesly Herrera, a first-generation college student, plans to major in psychology at Benedictine. She was a member of Westwood's varsity tennis and badminton teams, the National Honor Society and a volunteer with Health Education for Kids — an Arizona-wide program that links high-school and elementary-school students.

Andrew Kuhn, a former MCC student body president who is transferring



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to Westminster to complete a bachelor's degree in transnational studies. His goal is to become a diplomat for the United Nation or the U.S. Department of State.

Francisco Reyes, also a first-generation college student, plans plans to major in management and organizational behavior at Benedictine. He was involved with Westwood's student council, Advancement Via Individual Determination, a college readiness program, and the Hispanic Youth Institute.

Ben Watson, who was active in Westwood High School's International Baccalaureate program as well as its tabletop games club. He plans to study business or prelaw at Westminster.

Mesa has been making an aggressive effort to recruit colleges for the past five years.

So far it has landed branches of five small colleges that were founded in the late 1800s or early part of the last century:Albright, of Reading, Pa.; Benedictine, of Lisle, Ill.; Upper Iowa, of Fayette, Iowa; Westminster; of Fulton, Mo. and Wilkes of Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

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