

Valley & State

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Colleges planning Mesa sites tout full-tuition scholarships

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by Cathryn Creno - Sept. 23, 2012 07:57 PM
The Republic Herald.com

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A degree from a small liberal-arts college can be pricey.

Westminster College of Fulton, Mo., which is opening a branch in Mesa in the next year, can cost more than \$15,000 annually. That compares with \$2,280 a year for a full schedule at Mesa Community College.

So, four of the liberal-arts colleges that are in the process of opening branch campuses in Mesa have announced that they will each offer two full-tuition scholarships to local students at the start of the next school year.

The schools are Westminster; Albright College of Reading, Pa.; Benedictine University of Lisle, Ill.; and Wilkes University of Wilkes-Barre, Pa. The scholarships will be available to Mesa Public Schools graduates and administered by a program called Mesa Counts on College, a partnership that comprises the city of Mesa, Mesa Public Schools and Mesa Community College.

The announcement, made late Friday afternoon at a college expo at the Mesa Arts Center, reached just a few potential takers. Only a handful of high-school students and family members turned out for the event.

Still, the possible financial assistance was interesting to students such as Tiffany Troutman, 18, who graduated from Red Mountain High School this year and would like to pursue a degree in creative writing, and to Audriana Sanchez, 16, a Mesa resident who attends a charter school called Gilbert Early College. Neither has firm college plans, and both are interested in the small colleges.

Remaining Views

"I have never even heard of these schools -- they are brand new," Sanchez said.

Westwood High School senior Francisco Suriel, 17, is fairly certain he will study business and engineering at Arizona State University next year, but he dropped by the expo and picked up brochures, shirts and pens from the new schools.

Mesa has been making an aggressive effort to recruit liberal-arts colleges for the past four years and so far has landed five small-college branches.

Upper Iowa University is the most recent college to announce plans to open an education center in Mesa. The school, founded in 1857, is based in Fayette, Iowa.

Benedictine, a Catholic college, was founded in 1887. Westminster was founded in 1851, Albright in 1856 and Wilkes in 1933.

All except for Upper Iowa are moving into city-owned buildings in downtown Mesa.

Organizers of Friday's expo had hoped at least 200 people would attend the the event. It did draw a large number of adults, mostly from local schools or businesses.

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Brett Tyer, 23, talks to George Wolf (left) of Westminster College about the school's new program in Mesa at the Mesa Arts Center college expo.



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