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Wilkes University seeks local students for scholarship program

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[Tim Hacker/Tribune]

Posted: Thursday, November 6, 2014 7:15 am

By Trevor Godfrey, Tribune

Wilkes University Mesa is on the hunt, looking for high and low for potential candidates for its newest scholarship program — over \$150,000 in scholarships aimed at Mesa residents in various situations.

Wilkes focuses on providing education opportunities to first-generation students, those who will be the first in their families to graduate college. With that in mind, the school does its best to raise funds to provide as much financial assistance as possible to those students from lower-income backgrounds.

“Wilkes was founded to provide access to a college education to first-generation college students,” provost Anne Skleder said of the Founders Scholarships. “We want to provide those same opportunities in Arizona.”

Raising over \$250,000 for all of its programs in the last year, the school aims to use a significant portion of those funds to help its new location in Mesa attract as many students as possible.

Mesa Center for Higher Education

Wilkes President Patrick F. Leahy speaks during a ribbon cutting ceremony of the Mesa Center for Higher Education, which houses both Westminster College and Wilkes University, Thursday, Aug. 15, 2013 in Mesa. [Tim Hacker/Tribune]

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“We decided we were wanting to create a fund ... for scholarships specifically for first-generation students because they are the ones who have the biggest challenge when it comes to realizing the dream of higher education,” said Michael Wood, vice president for external affairs at Wilkes.

For undergraduate transfer students, \$5,000 a year for two years will be awarded to 30 students coming into the school’s business program.

An additional four Mesa residents will receive \$5,000 for unspecified majors and five \$1,000 scholarships are set aside for Phi Theta Kappa students transferring from Mesa Community College. Other MCC students may be eligible for a \$1,900 transfer scholarship.

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But, through all of this, the emphasis is centered on first-generation students. Wilkes, founded in 1933, has always been focused on bringing educational opportunities to those who may not have had them otherwise. While being a first-generation student is not an absolute requirement for any of the scholarships, that is certainly the organization's main goal.

"(First-generation students) really need to identify themselves to us because it's not really something we can research and find out," Wood said. "If you are first in your family to attend college and if you are interested in the unique college experience that Wilkes University offers ... there may be additional resources available to you."

Contact writer: (480) 898-6581 or tgodfrey@evtrib.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@trevoregodfrey](https://twitter.com/trevoregodfrey).

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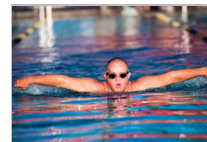
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