

GOVERNOR JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM

December 8, 2006

Hello, this is Governor Jennifer Granholm.

For nearly two years, I have been asking the Legislature to adopt my plan to college more affordable for Michigan families.

I believe my new Merit Award scholarship plan is the single most important issue currently before the Legislature – both for our families and our economy.

Beginning with today's high school seniors, my plan will give every student who attends college a \$4,000 scholarship - \$1,500 more than the current program.

Students can use this money to attend any 2 or 4-year school in Michigan, public or private, or a wide array of technical training programs.

Students who score well on the high school assessment will receive \$2,000 during their freshman and sophomore year and earn the remaining \$2,000 after completing successfully two years.

Students who do not receive a qualifying score on the assessment test can earn their entire \$4,000 scholarship by successfully completing two years of post-secondary education.

Why make this change?

The existing Merit Scholarship program sends the wrong message to at least half of our students.

It rewards less than half of our students based solely on whether they demonstrate "merit" on a standardized test they typically take in the 11th grade.

Those who score too low are left to fend for themselves, burdened with the false notion that they are not "college material."

But our message to all - not just some - of our students must be that to succeed in today's economy, no one's education can end at high school.

The evidence is clear – the states with the highest number of college graduates have the lowest unemployment rates and the fastest-growing economies.

As a state, we must greatly expand the opportunity to pursue a college education, particularly to children who grow up thinking that an education beyond high school is out of their grasp.

Coupled with the rigorous high school curriculum standards that I fought for and signed into law, this new scholarship program will position Michigan as the state that can lead the nation in educational attainment and economic growth.

But to make this plan a reality for Michigan families, the Legislature must act.

What a great holiday gift it will be for Michigan families!

Thank you for listening.