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**Missouri Wins Grant to Improve College Attainment**

Jefferson City – Most students enroll in college with the goal of earning a degree. They study hard, earn credits, are close to the degree requirements -- and then life happens. Financial, work or family problems force many students to drop out of college when they’re close to completing a degree.

A national initiative called the “Win-Win Project” has selected Missouri as one of six states in a program to help these students complete their education and attain their degrees. Missouri will receive a grant of $120,250 to work with four institutions to identify former students who acquired enough credit for an associate degree but never received it, or who came within nine hours of completing the degree requirements.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy, with funds from the Lumina Foundation, chose Missouri for its robust community college system and data collection capability. The institutions participating in the Win-Win Project are St. Louis Community College, Metropolitan Community College in Kansas City, Columbia College and DeVry University.

“This grant will help more Missourians obtain college degrees, making them better prepared to compete for the jobs of the future,” Gov. Jay Nixon said. “That also will allow us to make significant progress toward one of the four key goals – college completion − I set at my recent summit on higher education. As one of only six states selected by the Lumina Foundation and the Institute for Higher Education Policy to receive these funds, Missouri will be able to boost graduation rates for former students, including those who may be just a few credits short of earning their degrees.”

The Governor’s Summit on Higher Education, held Aug. 17 in Jefferson City, provided education leaders around the state with ideas and direction for maintaining quality while increasing the number of college graduates.

“Some economists project that 60 percent of tomorrow’s jobs will require a college degree,” says Interim Commissioner for Higher Education David Russell. “We need to produce an additional 3,300 graduates each year to raise the state’s rank from 35th in the nation in the number of young adults with college degrees. Helping students who are within reach of a degree to finally obtain it will improve their lives and significantly increase the number of Missouri graduates.”

The funds will be used to refine data collection techniques for identifying the students who are close to degree completion, so that the methods can be replicated across the country.

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