High School Counselors/Financial Aid Event

John M. Dunn
Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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• Good morning. Welcome to the Western Michigan--in person or by webcast. We're glad you're with us today to talk about the best ways you can help your students qualify for and receive financial aid.

• There's a full lineup of financial aid topics and program details. You'll hear, I know, how important it is to have your students fill in their FAFSA forms as early as possible as well as how important it is that they thoroughly investigate the many very specific scholarships for which they may qualify. It's also important to start the college application process early. Some of the best scholarship funding goes to students who apply during the first semester of their senior year.

• But before you get to all of that, there's are some even more fundamental messages I'd like you to share with all the bright young students you advise. The messages are simple:

  1) Tell them to go to college--somewhere. It's a decision that will have a lifelong impact on their quality of life, earning power and lifelong satisfaction. I'd love to welcome all of your students here to Western Michigan University, but I respect whatever decision students make, as long as it is to continue their education.

  2) Tell your students not to let stories about the high cost of college deter them from pursuing their dreams. They need to get the facts, do some comparison shopping and talk with financial aid offices. Based on news stories, too many students and families dramatically overestimate or underestimate the cost of college and they sometimes take themselves out of the game before it even starts.
3) Tell your students that a college degree DOES lead to a good job, higher lifetime earnings and lower risk for unemployment. This is the season of political hyperbole. Many of you have heard the tale that fewer than 50 percent of recent college grads can find a job in their fields. That's not the case here or at most other highly regarded public or private universities. For WMU students who choose a high-demand field like engineering for instance, 75 percent have a job by graduation and another 10 percent have been accepted to graduate school, started their own business or are involved in other planned post-graduate activities.

We are all after the same long-term goal. The success of our students. You play an enormous role in helping your students find their way to college and onto the career paths that will best suit them. We view you as our partners and want to help in any way possible. Thank you for taking time from your busy day to update the information you have to share with your students. Enjoy the webcast and, as we're fond of saying here in Bronco country, "Grab the reins."