



ThePostEditorials

A wise investment in state's 2-year schools

We support a plan to provide extra funds directly to Colorado's rural colleges and end the current subsidy from urban schools.

Colorado's community colleges are powerful engines that help drive our state's economy. But these versatile and low-cost institutions are being shortchanged in rural Colorado — the very place where they are most needed.

Institutions of higher education outside of the Denver metro area face special funding problems because they must spread some fixed costs over smaller enrollments. The state legislature last year recognized the need to support higher education in rural Colorado by allocating \$7.4 million in additional cash to four-year colleges like Adams State College in Alamosa, Western State College in Gunnison, Mesa State College in Grand Junction and Fort Lewis College in Durango. The extra cash averaged 22.4 percent more than per-pupil funding for similar urban schools

But even though rural community colleges face cost problems that are more severe than their four-year counterparts, they received no similar bonus. As a result, the Colorado Community College System trustees transferred \$10.3 million from urban community colleges to subsidize ru-

ral schools. Students in urban institutions like the Community College of Denver were thus shortchanged to help students at rural schools like Lamar.

The Post strongly supports efforts to strengthen rural Colorado — but not by robbing Peter to pay Paul. Therefore, we support a plan by community college supporters to provide the needed \$10.3 million directly to rural community colleges — freeing up the current subsidy from urban schools to meet the needs of metro area students.

Additionally, the plan calls for an extra \$6 million to go directly to rural schools — bringing them to the same relative funding now enjoyed by their four-year counterparts.

Community colleges are the state's best bargain in higher education, whether judged by the standpoint of students or taxpayers.

Funding them fairly will only add a total of \$16.3 million to the state's higher education budget — an investment that will be paid back many times over in new jobs and opportunity in rural Colorado and the Denver area alike.