



Funding opportunity

EDITORIAL THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

SENATE PRESIDENT Pro Tem Abel Tapia is sponsoring legislation that would help Colorado State University-Pueblo and the state's community colleges recover from the 2002 economic downturn caused by the post-9/11 recession.

Sen. Tapia is not alone in this effort. Every other member of the Southern Colorado delegation and 29 other senators and representatives want to help the schools recover financially, something that the bigger schools in the state have been able to do.

Those larger institutions, which draw students from far and wide, have been able to increase tuition substantially to bring their base funding up. In contrast, CSU-Pueblo and the community colleges largely serve student populations with limited financial resources.

For its part, CSU-Pueblo's funding from the state should be on a par with the University of Northern Colorado and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. That would allow it to provide the kind of academic programs needed in this region.

The community colleges, in total the largest higher education system in the state, have seen their modest increases in state funding fall behind the inflation rate. So even though the state's funding formula has helped backfill some of the losses of 2002 and subsequent years, those schools still are scrambling just to keep the ship of state afloat.

If Sen. Tapia's SB85 is passed, CSU-Pueblo would realize an infusion of \$3.1 million into its base funding. Meanwhile, Pueblo Community College would see a gain of \$800,000, Otero Junior College \$1.2 million, Trinidad State Junior College and Northeast Community College \$1 million-plus each.

This is largely a case of equity in state support for higher education. Schools outside of the Northern Front Range have populations with lower incomes but who need the availability of higher education and job training.

SB85 represents a sound expenditure to assure that all Coloradans have the opportunity to become financially successful citizens and taxpayers.