



Independent Colleges and Universities of Missouri

For Immediate Release

June 17, 2010

Contact: Connie Farrow

Phone: (314) 808-1158

ICUM: Governor's Cuts to Access Missouri hurt working families

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Gov. Nixon dealt tens of thousands of students from working and low-income Missouri families a devastating blow Thursday by slashing \$50 million from Access Missouri, the state's only need-based college financial aid program.

Members of Independent Colleges and Universities of Missouri (ICUM) are particularly disappointed that Gov. Nixon chose to substantially cut Access Missouri while modestly cutting the merit-based Bright Flight program and keeping the A+ program for students attending community colleges intact. The cut represents a 60 percent reduction in funding for the Access Missouri program. At least 42,000 Missouri students, including 13,700 students who attend independent institutions, depend on the program to make college affordable.

Earlier Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) had announced that it was making available \$30 million in scholarship resources, which could in part help mitigate the \$50 million state budget reduction, but the model for distributing those funds has not yet been determined.

“We are hopeful that the dream of achieving a college education has not moved out of reach for many students from working class and lower-income Missouri families,” said Marianne Inman, chair of Independent Colleges and Universities of Missouri. “The magnitude of the reduction to our state's only need-based financial aid program is a disservice not only to financially deserving students but to Missouri's workforce development initiatives.”

Students who receive an Access Missouri grant demonstrate strong financial need. Many of these students also qualify for federal financial aid, including the Pell Grant. The average family income of an Access recipient who attends a four-year public institution in Missouri is \$45,546; students attending four-year independent institutions have an average family income that is even lower - \$42,620. It is clear that the Access program is meeting the needs of Missouri's lowest-income students, whether these students choose a public or a private higher education institution, said Inman, who is president of Central Methodist University.

ICUM, the statewide association that represents Missouri's independent sector, is disappointed that Gov. Nixon declined several requests for meetings to discuss potential cuts to state financial aid programs. ICUM members also are concerned about the timing and the overall impact that the financial aid changes will have on students, who will begin returning to colleges and universities in a few weeks.

“While ICUM members believe the state should support all students deserving of financial aid, we feel strongly that our first priority should be those students with demonstrated financial need, the very students Access Missouri serves,” Inman said.

ICUM members look forward to learning how MOHELA will be utilized. It is critical that students continue to have access to state grant money that does not add to their loan burden.

“While we recognize that difficult financial times for the state of Missouri necessitate difficult decisions, we believe that Gov. Nixon has made the wrong decision for Missouri’s neediest college students,” Inman said

###

ICUM members include: Avila University; Central Methodist University; College of the Ozarks; Columbia College; Culver-Stockton; Drury University; Fontbonne University; Hannibal-LeGrange; Lindenwood University; Logan University – College of Chiropractic; Maryville University; Missouri Baptist University; Park University; Saint Louis University; Southwest Baptist University; Stephens College; Washington University; Webster University; Wentworth Military Academy; Westminster College; William Jewell College; and William Woods University.