

Letter: State's private colleges play key role in training workers

By TCPalm Staff

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As higher education in Florida struggles with severe budget cuts, tuition hikes and enrollment caps, modest state tuition grants continue to prove effective in helping an important but sometimes overlooked class of students: working-adult learners. The grants also provide the state's workforce with people trained in high-demand fields, stimulate the economy and help save the public's tax dollars.

A prime example is the \$4.4 million state ABLE (Access to Better Learning and Education) grant currently assisting more than 3,700 working-adult learners who are pursuing the American dream of a better life for themselves and their families.

In today's deeply challenged economy, the ABLE grant saves taxpayer money in that, for every dollar invested in private education, two dollars are saved in taxpayer funds. State tuition grants go directly to students to spend at the school of their choice; most private schools are not subsidized with state funding.

This year's annual ABLE grant award is a maximum amount eligible of \$1,182 per student. Meanwhile the average taxpayer subsidy to a student attending a state university is approximately \$44,000 per student over four years, or roughly 10 times the amount to Florida residents who choose to attend Keiser University.

As regionally accredited institutions, the 13 ABLE recipient schools meet the same standards as Florida's public universities.

Students are prepared for careers in critical workforce shortage fields in Florida such as biotechnology, nursing, health care, elementary education, criminal justice and information technology.

As the need to compete globally and nationally increases, private, career colleges will continue to play a critical role in job creation, economic impact and talent development to meet this challenge.

Belinda Keiser

vice chancellor

Keiser University

Fort Lauderdale



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