

Supporting Higher Education Choice for Iowa's Workforce

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Iowa is a state that is alive and vibrant with opportunity, and as our state motto indicates, offers freedom to flourish. Iowa's ability to flourish is directly linked to the outstanding opportunities for a student to further their education after high school and provide the workforce necessary for Iowa's top industries to thrive. Private colleges in Iowa are some of the best in the country, support workforce needs, and do so with no direct impact on Iowa's taxpayers.

Recently, proposed HSB 533 seeks to authorize Iowa community colleges to offer specific bachelor's degree programs. With three Regent universities, 15 community colleges, and 26 private colleges and universities, Iowa has an abundance of educational choices contributing to the economy and way of life in communities throughout the state. Currently, the state appropriates \$3.9 billion to K-12 education, \$623 million to the Regent institutions, \$243 million to the community colleges, and \$0 to Iowa's private colleges and universities. Iowans will pay an additional tens of millions in taxes if the Iowa legislature enables Iowa's community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees. HSB 533 creates unnecessary duplication of tremendous efforts by the Regents and private colleges, efforts these institutions are accomplishing exceedingly well.

The impact of private colleges goes beyond the sheer number of bachelor's degrees granted each year. These institutions serve their communities and drive local economies. In Dubuque, Clarke University, Loras College, and the University of Dubuque provide nearly 500 full-time jobs and have over 20,000 alumni living in the state of Iowa. Together, Dubuque's private colleges are monumental economic engines, driving employment, local business activity, quality healthcare, housing demand, and cultural vibrancy. Our institutions in Dubuque educate students for professional roles that have evolved and changed rapidly since each of us were founded over 180 years ago. Majors in health care, business and finance, education, social services, criminal justice, engineering, and aviation have evolved to serve the Dubuque community, the state of Iowa, and our region in preparing for the professions needed throughout this nearly two-century history.

We constantly look to the future of our state as we develop and invest in our strategic plans around workforce needs. This includes the proposed Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine College at the University of Dubuque, a true community effort. We are nimble and responsive institutions—with an extraordinary record, including lower than average student borrowing, higher than average retention and graduation rates, and exceedingly high job placement rates within a year of graduation. We are unified in our commitment to educating the whole person through rigorous academic inquiry, experiential learning, and service to others. We prepare students to think critically, act ethically, and lead with compassion in their professions and communities, fostering lives of purpose, responsibility, and civic engagement.

Clarke University, Loras College, and the University of Dubuque are cornerstones in the greater Dubuque community and offer proven pathways that keep bachelor's degrees attainable for traditional and adult learners across Iowa. This includes students who choose to start their education at a community college or prefer on-line and hybrid learning models. Each institution offers transfer pathway agreements that provide a smooth and reliable experience for students. This same commitment exists across all of Iowa. Through the Iowa Private College Transfer Collaborative, private colleges and universities have worked to develop multiple transfer majors that provide a smooth and flexible pathway for community college students to timely complete their bachelor's degree. This is a proven and accessible program adapting to workforce needs.

Flourishing in Iowa means students should have a choice in their educational pathways through already existing and proven educational options with taxpayer dollars dedicated to solving existing challenges in the state. HSB 533 poses a significant threat to the sustainability of many of these small private institutions currently serving our communities across the state while adding to the burden of Iowa taxpayers. Clarke University, Loras College, and the University of Dubuque stand ready to serve Iowa students and attract new students from around the country who seek an education, empowering them to contribute to local communities and to make Iowa stronger for years to come.