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The Problem with the New College Voucher Program

The Denver Post, Open Forum

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This letter was written in response to an Oct. 11, 2004, article in the *Denver Post*, “New oversight won't fix larger college woes.”

Editor:

The *Denver Post* correctly points out that the Colorado Commission on Higher Education's (CCHE) new performance contracts, which colleges and universities must sign to be eligible to receive vouchers, will not solve higher education's financial crisis. But The Post did not mention that these contracts also fail to ensure increased access to higher education for low-income and minority students.

The governor, CCHE, and the sponsors and supporters of the college voucher legislation have argued for years that the primary goal of the program is to improve Colorado's dismal record of providing post-secondary access to these students. But a careful reading of the performance contracts, which are supposed to hold institutions accountable to meet certain goals, reveals that they do not include any measures of access for low-income and minority students.

At a minimum, schools should be required to measure the percentage of undergraduate students who either receive Pell grants or who are non-white, which are the nationally recognized and applied definitions of low-income and minority students. While the focus on increasing institutions' accountability to taxpayers is welcome, CCHE should also be held accountable for providing an opportunity for all Colorado students.

By Spiros Protopsaltis

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