



Gov. Wolf proposes \$200 million for college scholarships

By Anthony Hennen

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(The Center Square) – A push from Gov. Tom Wolf could create a \$200 million scholarship fund for students who attend public colleges in the state.

“When it comes to pursuing a higher education, skyrocketing costs over the last decade have put that dream out of reach for too many families. Pennsylvanians are being priced out of a brighter future,” Wolf said at a visit to Millersville University. “When our brightest and best Pennsylvanians can’t pursue a higher education because it’s unaffordable, that means we’re doing something wrong.”

To address that, Wolf has proposed the Nellie Bly Scholarship Program, funded by money from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Race Horse Development Trust Fund. Students could use the scholarship for tuition and attendance costs, and would be required to stay in Pennsylvania for as long as they receive the scholarship. They must be full-time students and enroll at a community college or a public college within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

The scholarship would also focus on students in health care, education, and public service-related programs, where there’s a high need for workers. For community college students, they could receive up to \$2,000 annually, and public university students could receive up to \$4,000.

Rep. Jordan Harris, D-Philadelphia, introduced **legislation** to establish the program, which would also submit a report to the General Assembly to detail how many students receive scholarships, as well as graduation rates.

While the cost of college could fall for students receiving the scholarship, the rising cost of college will not be affected, only students’ ability to pay. While some blame **a lack of state funding** for higher education in driving up costs, others blame **the availability of federal student loans** for helping universities expand noneducation-related activity, such as administrative roles and athletics programs.

“More federal aid to students enables colleges to raise tuition more. Salaries rise; bureaucracies expand; more courses – from “History and Analysis of Rock Music” to “Ultimate Frisbee” – are

offered; dorms, dining halls, and recreational centers become more lavish,” wrote David Boaz, vice president of the Cato Institute. “Even with all this spending, employers don’t find that new grads are well prepared for the workplace.”

As Pennsylvania’s college-aged population drops, its public college enrollment **has fallen** by almost 22% since 2010. The Department of Education has moved to combine six PASSHE colleges into three to cut costs and attract students recently.