



ISU's private-corporate donor program nets \$21.6 million

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While some universities and colleges in Illinois worry about funding and dwindling enrollment, Illinois State University announced this week that it raised \$21.6 million in gifts and commitments for scholarships and university programs from corporate partners and donors.

The fundraising initiative for its 2016 fiscal year was the second highest in school history, and included support from almost 12,000 alums, ISU officials said.

This type of fund procurement should be encouraged, Neal McCluskey, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, said.

"I think it would be a good thing anywhere if colleges and universities, especially public colleges and universities, look to do more private fundraising and are less reliant on state and local government," McCluskey said. "I think it is better if people voluntarily give money to an institution than an institution taking money from taxpayers, whether the taxpayers want their money going there or not."

According to the university, ISU's private fundraising effort led to the award of 2,008 scholarships in 2016. The university said that reflected a 7 percent increase from 2015, and included more than 1,000 first-time donors.

McCluskey said many universities and colleges are too dependent on state funding and, to reduce the burden on taxpayers, the state needs to decrease its funding allocation for universities.

"If the state allocates money to the university, no matter what their private fundraising, then it is not really going to help taxpayers," McCluskey said. "It would help taxpayers if the state says 'We are going to decrease your funding and you, public colleges and universities, need to work harder to get private funding.'

"So private funding doesn't necessarily have to replace state funding, but that is the direction in which colleges should go," he said.