


U.S. Education Secretary Lauds Delaware for Increasing Access to College


[Photos from the day's events](#)

With free community college and an aggressive effort to help students continue education beyond high school, Delaware is recognized as a model for President Obama initiative

Newark, DE – Highlighting Delaware as a model state for providing students with preparation for and access to educational opportunities beyond high school, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan used the state's efforts to advocate for President Obama's [America's College Promise](#) proposal to make community college free. Governor Markell, along with U.S. Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons, joined Duncan for a discussion with students who have benefited from the state's SEED scholarship, which provides two years of free college tuition to Delaware high school graduates with at least a 2.5 grade point average. They also highlighted recent progress the state has made in preparing students for education beyond high school, with record high graduation rates, record low dropout rates and double the number of high school students enrolled in college courses compared to last year. 

“Today, more than ever, Americans need more knowledge and skills to meet the demands of a growing global economy without having to take on decades of debt before they even embark on their career,” **said Duncan**. “That means it's more important than ever that we ensure that the opportunities offered to students today in Delaware are made available across the country. I applaud Governor Markell for having the vision to find new ways to provide access to college and career training programs.

“We also know that those opportunities are only possible for students because of great teachers and school leaders. Their work is why the state is reducing dropout rates while increasing graduation and college attendance rates.”

The SEED program uses state funds to pay for tuition at Delaware Tech and for the University of Delaware’s two-year Associate in Arts program. Markell signed legislation in 2010 to create the Inspire Scholarship – a similar program that would provide qualifying Delaware State University students  with the same amount of tuition that SEED scholars receive.

“No student who would benefit from an education here should be denied that opportunity because of an inability to pay,” **said Markell**. “That’s the message we send through our SEED and Inspire scholarships and it’s exciting to see the President take that message to community colleges across the country. But we know we can do more to ensure students have access to the best education and training for them. It’s why we’re [giving more students access to college-level courses](#) as well as opportunities to earn professional credentials in growing industries while still in high school.”

Today’s event at Delaware Tech’s Stanton Campus followed last week’s launch of the Governor’s [Pathways to Prosperity initiative](#), which will establish partnerships with Delaware employers, universities, and school districts to prepare students for a bright future in high-demand fields and careers. The Governor and Secretary highlighted the effort today as an important way for Delaware to build on its efforts to prepare young people for good jobs in the new economy.

The state is dedicating more than \$1 million of federal grants to support school districts that make the pathway programs available to students, who will take hundreds of hours of specialized instruction and hands-on training. They will have the opportunity to graduate with industry-recognized certificates and college credits.

“I am proud that Secretary Duncan chose Delaware to hold a roundtable discussion on workforce development and college affordability,” **said Carper**. “These are the kinds of conversations we need to be having as we continue to explore the best ways to ensure all Americans have the opportunity to obtain a quality education so that they can be competitive in the global market place. I think we do a good job of doing that here in the First State, but we can always do better, and I thank Governor Markell for leading a thoughtful discussion among students and business leaders we gathered here at Del Tech today.”

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Earlier in the day Duncan and Markell visited Howard High School, where they observed an English class and spoke with teachers, as well as Principal Stanley Spoor, about the remarkable progress the school has made in recent years with support of funds the state won through the federal Race to the Top grant competition. Four years ago, less than half of Howard students scored proficient in math and reading. Last year, 82 percent were proficient in reading and 79 percent were proficient in math.

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