Announcer:

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap:

To help deserving students get a college degree without debt – that’s the goal of a new scholarship offered at Missouri State University.

The [MoState Access Award](https://www.missouristate.edu/FinancialAid/Scholarships/mostate-access-award.htm) will begin in fall 2023 for new undergraduate and transfer students who qualify for the federal Pell Grant program. I’m Emily Yeap.

Joining me today tp share more about the award is [Zora Mulligan](https://search.missouristate.edu/people/zoramulligan), executive vice president at Missouri State.

Zora Mulligan:

The MoState Access Award is a new scholarship at Missouri State that’s intended to really open the doors of higher education to the most needy students in the state of Missouri.

Emily Yeap:

This new award is one way to address the university’s recent enrollment challenges.

Zora Mulligan:

So, we took a look at our enrollment numbers, and obviously Missouri State is a little bit down this fall, but more specifically, we’re down in terms of Pell Grant students, so students who are eligible for the federal Pell Grant. Our enrollment in that category has declined since 2015. And so, we asked ourselves, “What do we need to do to make sure that we can continue to recruit those students to Missouri State because they are a really important part of our student body?” and this was the answer that the team arrived at.

Emily Yeap:

What types of students qualify for this award?

Zora Mulligan:

So, students who are freshmen next fall or who are new transfer students next fall can receive the award. They need to complete the FAFSA, which is the Federal Application for Free Student Aid, by February 1st of next year. So, that’s a really important thing. The FAFSA will let them understand if they’re eligible for the Pell Grant award, and if they’re eligible for Pell, then they’ll be eligible for MoState Access. The MoState Access Award is a really generous financial aid package. It includes the cost of tuition and fees so the full cost of tuition and fees will be paid by a combination of state, federal and potentially institutional funds as well. State and federal need-based aid are going to cover most of the tuition and fees for students who apply. The award will pay for any amount that’s not covered. So, the program is going to be, potentially, an expense for the university, but in the long run, we think it will generate revenue by bringing additional students to campus.

So, it’s a great benefit for students who are interested in having that amazing Missouri State University experience.

Emily Yeap

Students who receive the award can renew it for eight semesters if they remain Pell-eligible and meet certain requirements.

According to Mulligan, the MoState Access Award may be a deciding factor for students considering attending college.

Zora Mulligan:

So, we’ve seen throughout the state decline in overall college going, and so, a lot of people are taking a look at going to college and asking themselves, “Is this the right experience for me or is this the right time for me to go to college?” Especially with such a good job market a lot of people are thinking, “Maybe I’ll just take a job and work for a couple of years.” Our plan is for this award to really be an additional piece of persuasion for people to understand going to college is absolutely within reach for me, getting a great experience like the ones offered at Missouri State is something that I can have and that is available to a person like me.

Emily Yeap:

Mulligan elaborates on boosting enrollment.

Zora Mulligan:

We have a lot of plans that are in play right now to make sure that we have a really strong freshman class next year. MoState Access is one really important part of that because students who are eligible for the Pell Grant are again a really important part of our overall student body. But we’re spending a lot of time and energy making sure that people in Springfield, in particular, and the surrounding communities, are aware of everything that’s available at Missouri State University. And as, again, they’re thinking about their future, they think of Missouri State as a first option and a really great place to come to prepare for life and work.

Emily Yeap:

For those unsure about the value of a college degree, Mulligan offers a few points to consider.

Zora Mulligan:

The data really demonstrates in the long run, a college education does pay off. And so, while there might be jobs that are available right now and pay pretty well right now, often jobs that have better benefits and more stability, and usually higher incomes, are associated with that college degree. So, I think in the long run, it’s important to remember that there’s a lot of benefit and utility in a college degree.

I would also say it’s really important to remember that college is a great experience. It is an unusual and unparalleled opportunity to meet lots of different kinds of people, to really explore interests in a way that you have very few opportunities to do in the rest of your life. There is, sort of, a utilitarian argument and that’s really important to consider. But again, I think it’s really important to remember that college is a lot of fun and is an opportunity for people to grow tremendously as humans and as members of our community.

Emily Yeap:

To find out more about the MoState Access Award, visit [missouristate.edu/FinancialAid/Scholarships](https://www.missouristate.edu/FinancialAid/Scholarships/mostate-access-award.htm).

I’m Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer:

For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.