

FOUNDATION COULD FORCE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ISSUE

Grants could create new system for those not ready for university

Feb 20, 2006 - Dan Black - IDAHO PRESS TRIBUNE

NAMPA — The landscape for higher education in the Treasure Valley could change quickly to accommodate the demand for vocational and community college classes. “There’s a critical need in this valley,” said Lori Fisher, the executive director of the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, based in Boise.

The Foundation could be the hammer that forges what sort of system evolves. It funds education initiatives in Idaho with private money and has spent much of the last year looking at the need for a community college system in Idaho. Community colleges typically serve those who don’t fit a traditional four-year university system either because they can’t afford it or are not academically prepared.

The Foundation is looking at grant proposals for a community college system, and “we haven’t seen a model we are ready to fund, yet,” Fisher said.

The only community college in the valley is the Treasure Valley Community College — Caldwell Center, which serves about 2,000 students a year from all over the valley.

Boise State University provides a similar role, offers classes at three locations in Nampa and serves about 5,500 people. But those classes cost more than those at a community college, said BSU West director Dennis Griffin, and don’t provide open enrollment.

BSU and TVCC have submitted grant requests from the Foundation for large sums.

Fisher said the state Legislature has been talking about community colleges for decades and that the Foundation is not going to wait for it to take the lead.

“Our goal is to increase access and the sooner the better,” she said. “We don’t have a time frame.” Fisher said the foundation is “still reviewing the proposals.”

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