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Our Views: Centralia College a Valuable Avenue of Higher Education

By The Chronicle

Centralia College is bustling as fall quarter is underway.

The college continues to grow in reputation, from offering a four-year bachelor of applied science management program to expanded online degree opportunities to a campus that continues to improve (the Kiser Natural Outdoors Learning Lab, the 70,000-square-foot Science Center, the remodel of the Health and Wellness Center).

For student life, a vibrant array of activities take place on campus, including the arts and athletics, with a growing international student population.

We believe education is key to the future economic well-being of our community and nation. Access for all, not just the privileged, helps maintain a strong nation able to compete in the world market.

At Centralia College, through the Centralia College Foundation, qualified students can find tuition assistance. The Foundation in 2013 awarded more than \$500,000 in financial assistance to more than 200 students.

Perhaps most telling about the quality educational experience at Centralia College are transfer and graduation rates. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education's College Completion report, Centralia College ranks first in Washington state compared to other community colleges. The national graduation rate average for community colleges is 20 percent. Centralia College's graduation rate is at 40 percent.

Another measure of community college success is the percent of the student body that either graduates within three years of enrollment or successfully transfers to a four-year university. In that measurement, Centralia College has the second highest rate in the state and the 40th in the entire nation.

Is Centralia College the best path? Is it better to start out as a freshman at a four-year university?

A new study out this week from the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges reveals students who start out at a community college excel when transferring to a university. Of all of the state university graduates, about 40 percent first studied at community colleges.

Without the valuable option of attending a community college and its lower tuition costs, many would never earn a college degree. Centralia College provides the venue for educational success.