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HEADLINE: GRANHOLM SAYS NEW **MERIT SCHOLARSHIP** WILL MAKE COLLEGE A REALITY FOR MORE STUDENTS

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The following information was released by the **Michigan** Governor:

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today said critics of her new **Merit Scholarship** are missing the point about her plan that will make more money available to more students while helping **Michigan** prepare its workforce for the 21st century economy. Speaking with parents and students, along with educators, business people, and labor representatives at Delta College in Bay County, the Governor said the new **Merit Scholarship** represents a fundamental shift in how we view higher education in **Michigan**. "Every child growing up in **Michigan** today must have more than a high school diploma to compete in the 21st century economy," said Granholm. "The new **Merit Scholarship** recognizes a new kind of **merit**: success in college and success in earning the credentials job-providers demand. That's the type of achievement we should be rewarding." The new **Merit Scholarship** will guarantee every student who successfully completes two years of college a minimum of \$4,000 in **scholarship** support from state and federal sources - an amount roughly equal to two years of community college tuition. Beginning with the high school graduating class of 2007, students will be eligible to receive this **scholarship** if they earn an associate's degree from a **Michigan** community college, achieve junior standing at a four-year **Michigan** college or university, or complete an equivalent technical or career training program. Previous high school requirements to receive a **Merit Scholarship**, including earning a diploma, completing 40 hours of community service, and taking the high school assessment test remain in place. Students must enroll in post-secondary education within two years of graduating from high school and reach the "two-year" milestone within four years. Military service does not count against these requirements. A significant difference in the program is that rather than requiring students to pass a standardized test in high school to qualify for the **scholarship**, beginning in 2007, students will only be required to take a college-entrance exam, which will open the door for tens of thousands more to qualify for the **scholarship**. According to Granholm, the current **scholarship** program turns its back on students who, for whatever reason, fail the state's standardized assessment test or skip it entirely, sending a signal to tens of thousands of students that they are on their own if they want to continue their education. "Just as we guarantee children a public high school

education, we should be guaranteeing them a college education as well," Granholm said. The new **Merit Scholarship** will put two years of college within reach for every student in our state, and thereby strengthen the odds that they will complete their college education or its equivalent." The over-arching recommendation of the Cherry Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth was that the state must expect all students to continue their education beyond high school. The report also stressed the need to both increase participation and degree completion in higher education. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, states with the highest percentage of adults with college degrees have the fastest growing economies, the lowest rates of unemployment, and the highest growth in income nationwide. State's benefit economically based on the education levels of their citizens who also have an economic incentive to get a good education. Whereas the average high school graduate earns an annual salary of \$28,800, a college graduate earns \$46,800 per year. Under the Granholm proposal, funds from the tobacco settlement that currently fund the **Merit Scholarship** program will be deposited into a trust fund for the new **Merit Scholarship** once the obligations are met to the graduating classes of 2005 and 2006.