

Hendrix offers scholarships to CHS, MSM seniors

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Students who live in lower income households at Catholic High School and Mount St. Mary Academy in Little Rock now can move Hendrix College in Conway from their college dream list to an actual prospect.

In October, the college announced that it will offer Hendrix Aspire Scholarships, full scholarships for up to four students eligible for a federal Pell Grant in each of the new four partnerships: Arkansas Commitment (a leadership development program for black students), Central High School in Little Rock, Catholic High and Mount St. Mary. Pell Grants are given to students with low-income families to allow access to colleges. The Aspire Scholarship will cover tuition and fees, meal plans and on-campus housing in addition to continuous academic support to make sure the students can graduate in four years.

“Like Hendrix, Catholic High School for Boys and Mount St. Mary Academy are close-knit and nurturing communities with high expectations of their students in and beyond the classroom,” Hendrix College President Bill Tsutsui said in a statement to Arkansas Catholic. “By making Hendrix affordable and accessible for their students, the Hendrix Aspire Scholarships will ensure that promising young graduates of Catholic and the Mount, no matter what their means, will continue to be challenged and supported as they prepare for lives of meaning and accomplishment.”

For both Catholic High and the Mount, this is the first partnership of this kind with a college.

The scholarship program began in spring 2015 when Hendrix partnered with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and KIPP Delta Public Schools for scholarships.

“We wanted to open the gates wider for students who have difficulty realizing a liberal arts

education at Hendrix College,” said Karen Foust, executive vice president for enrollment at Hendrix. “We wanted to make it more accessible to them and more affordable.”

The Aspire Scholarship will cover the remaining balance of what other scholarships or federal aid does not cover. Foust said tuition, fees and room and board costs \$52,114 a year at Hendrix. There will likely be some extra funds to cover book costs and other expenditures for students, Foust said.

“We were thrilled with this,” said Catholic High principal Steve Straessle. “It is a unique, a novel way to solve one of the biggest stumbling blocks to achieving the American dream ... and Hendrix just made it more attainable for kids who might not ever consider a top-notch education like Hendrix.”

To be eligible for the scholarship, students must fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid to make sure they can receive a Pell Grant. Students must also meet standard Hendrix admission requirements. There is no GPA requirement for Hendrix or the scholarship.

Mount St. Mary President/CEO Karen Flake said there are a number of students who would benefit from Hendrix.

“They want their students to think and focus on the individual development of the students,” Flake said. “ ... I think in some ways Hendrix is a good match for girls that are finding a niche here and I think Hendrix will help continue that.”

At Catholic High, there are about 25 students in ninth through 12th grades that are currently Pell Grant eligible.

Flake said the scholarship gives the option of a private college education, which some students “might see as unaffordable.”

In September, Hendrix was listed as the No. 10 “Most Innovative” liberal arts college in the nation by U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges.

Foust said the “academic rigors” at the partnership schools are good preparation for Hendrix classes.

“We can provide a good support system through mentorships and the student-faculty ratio here is 11-1 so the students have a much better connection to the faculty,” Foust said. “The students who are coming into the college next year will be signing a four-year graduation guarantee.”

The partnership will also likely help recruitment for Catholic High and MSM.

“Conventional wisdom dictates it will help, but what we’re more concerned about is that our kids have a way to close that circle and connect their future lives to their education experience,” Straessle said. “It’s not about getting new students for us — it’s about providing the best foothold on the future for the ones that we do have.”