Rigorous courses are path to success

Wyoming is blessed with abundant energy assets and an incredible natural environment. But our most precious resource is our people; our youth are our future.

In 2006, the state of Wyoming created a scholarship program that is unique in all of post-secondary education. The result was the Hathaway program, a fully endowed, constitutionally protected program that will forever benefit people who seek to continue their education beyond high school in Wyoming. Many dedicated public servants contributed, and will continue to contribute, to the creation and evolution of this extraordinary scholarship program.

At a time when other states are struggling, Wyoming can be proud that it had the will and the foresight to make a lasting commitment to higher education. The Wyoming State Legislature provides essential continued oversight of the Hathaway Scholarship Program, and this year it is considering proposals to modify the Hathaway Success Curriculum.

The Success Curriculum is required for all three tiers of Hathaway funding, independent of a student’s educational or career goals. It provides important guidance for students by outlining the minimum coursework necessary to be eligible for scholarship money. And, because the guidance is tied to financial aid, it represents an extraordinarily wise use of market incentives for students to make the most of their high school years.

I hope that those who would build more latitude into the Success Curriculum will bear in mind one important point: the Success Curriculum does not completely define the high school coursework necessary for success in post-secondary education, whether at UW, one of Wyoming’s community colleges, or some other approved post-secondary educational program. Instead, the Success Curriculum defines a minimum core on which students need to build for success, no matter what form of post-secondary education they intend to pursue.

To think that we can squeeze every student into the same curricular mold and thereby assure “success” is naïve at best.

In this respect, we may have misled ourselves by la-
Tom Buchanan and Myron Allen
Tom Buchanan is president of the University of Wyoming. Myron Allen is UW’s provost.

Perspective
belonging the required Hathaway curriculum “the Success Curriculum.” It forms the necessary core, but we shouldn’t regard it as sufficient. Students need to take more to be well prepared for postsecondary education. What type of postsecondary education they plan to pursue — technical training, an associate degree, or a bachelor’s degree — may well influence their choices of additional coursework. But in any case there is plenty of room in the high school curriculum to allow students to exceed the minimum requirements for the scholarship.

Beginning as early as we can, we must encourage our high school students to take the most challenging coursework available, every semester, including the senior year. This means a steady diet of science, mathematics, reading, writing and oral communication, social studies, fine and performing arts and foreign language. For some students it means technical courses required to pursue further training in the trades and technical fields. There is no shortcut, and it makes no sense to look for shortcuts when the public is providing the opportunity for free. Meeting the Hathaway requirements should be a byproduct of meeting this higher challenge, not a goal in itself.

Tomorrow’s students need to take as many rigorous course offerings as their high school provides, and they need to take them at a level that stretches their intellects. We urge all students to challenge themselves with the most vigorous coursework they can in high school, because that is the best predictor for a successful future.

High school students can qualify for the Hathaway Scholarship by following the success curriculum, regardless of its final configuration, but many will need much more than that to be successful.

UW is dedicated to providing accessible and affordable higher education of the highest quality. The Hathaway Success Curriculum helps us accomplish that by requiring some college-preparatory high school coursework.

However the Legislature decides to proceed with the various proposals to modify this curriculum, we urge students to exceed these minimum requirements so they arrive ready for the many opportunities that a university education offers.