

This past week, the University of Wyoming Board of Trustees voted to establish new admission standards for UW. Starting in fall 2013, assured admission to UW from high school will require a grade-point average of at least 3.0, an ACT score of 21 or higher, completion of the Wyoming Legislature's Hathaway "success curriculum," and the completion of at least two additional years of fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, humanities, career-technical courses, or additional foreign languages. The new standards will not exclude any students who would be admitted under UW's current standards. Instead, UW has made a commitment to admit these students and to provide additional academic support through programs including its award-winning Synergy Program.

What the new standards will do is clarify how students can take advantage of the opportunities that the public has provided. Wyoming's statewide and community leaders have devoted tremendous resources to public education, through excellent K-12 systems, national-caliber community colleges, a thriving and well-funded university, and the remarkable Hathaway Scholarship Program. These resources are available to every student, from the most academically inclined to the most economically disadvantaged. To live up to our reputation as the Equality State, we need to send the clearest message — to everyone, not just the educationally privileged — about the pathways to college success.

In an increasingly knowledge-based, global economy, Wyoming needs more of its residents to succeed at post-secondary education of all types. For students who pursue bachelor's degrees in Wyoming, the new admission standards will help reduce the risk of college failure. Such failures represent serious losses of time, personal finances, public resources, and human talent — Wyoming's most important resource.

There is a subtler but no less important benefit. Every college classroom in which students are failing is a classroom in which well-prepared students get less of an education than they should. Our assured admission standards guide all college-bound students on how to prepare for college-level learning, and they will help ensure that all of Wyoming's sons and daughters who want it can receive a world-class education right here in Wyoming. We know, from the experiences of our students and alumni, that UW is capable of preparing people for success at the highest levels, in fields ranging from politics to private enterprise and from music to mathematics. A university that enjoys the highest level of per-capita public funding of any flagship university in the nation owes learning opportunities of this caliber to all of its students.