

The Blue Banner's View

College must remain a top agenda initiative for Obama

A college education, whether it be from a two-year or a four-year school, is one of the best investments you can make.

Last week, President Obama spoke pointedly in his State of the Union address about the need for manufacturing jobs to come back to the U.S., gun control legislation, minimum wage increase, environmental protection, immigration overhaul and the importance of an early childhood education which could lead down the road to enrolling in a good college.

Last Wednesday, the president chose Asheville for what has become something of a tradition, taking the themes of the State Of The Union on the road the day after, trying to rally public support for his agenda.

He spoke at Linamar Auto Plant, highlighting his plan in support of college curricula such as Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, which teaches courses designed to help mostly older students find jobs in specialized areas such as manufacturing.

Linamar, a company that brought in \$2.86 billion in 2011 according to their website, operates manufacturing sites located in Canada, Mexico, Hungary, China and France. Linamar manufactures parts and systems for the automotive industry, energy and mobile industrial markets according to their website.

As the semester nears March, many UNC Asheville students will be moving toward the daunting task of finding a stable job that, at some point, will clear their student loan debt.

Seventy-five percent of the public believes a college education is too expensive for most Americans, according to Pew Research reports. This remains a

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concern for parents when thinking about what kind of college education they can afford for their children.

Ways to ease the burden of student debt and a quicker way to repay loans must be a higher initiative. According to Pew, 48 percent of students who took out college loans find it difficult to pay them back.

A growing number of students now have to take out loans because of economic demands on parents.

Unfortunately for many, due to the congressional budget fights in 2011, the federal government cut Pell Grant eligibility from 18 semesters to 12 and eliminated grants for future summer studies.

As a result from cuts, a study from the University of Alabama's Education Policy Center study found enrollment declined at 47 of 62 two-year colleges in Arkansas, Alabama and Mississippi. Researchers also concluded due to changes, 5,000 students lost Pell eligibility in 2012.

Almost 17,000 more students will most likely lose grant money this year. This can have an effect on N.C. public universities' in and out-of-state tuition rates and students can watch school programs steadily decline.

Obama and Congress must work together to better distribute financial aid and keep school tuition low. At the same time, politics must not place the foundation of this issue on how well your money is allocated

toward your college education.

Both in his State of the Union address and his speech at Linamar, Obama championed education, urging that more children have access to early childhood education.

He stated he wants high schools to prepare students for a high-tech economy and make sure colleges are both affordable and accessible to every American.

Obama's speech at Linamar praised the plant for its work in gaining higher insourcing standards and paving ways for workers to be able to receive the finest education so they will be able to get skilled work jobs.

He praised A-B Tech's partnership with Linamar in helping students take classes customized to assist them in getting specialized jobs.

"That's good for the community," Obama said. "It's good for Linamar, because they're getting workers who they know can do the job. It's good for the folks who are going to the community college because they know if they work hard and they do well in the class there's a job waiting for them. It's good for economy as a whole."

Going to college, whether it be a technical college or four-year school, should be an important investment this country puts as a higher agenda initiative.

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The Blue Banner is UNC Asheville's student newspaper. We publish each Wednesday except during summer sessions, finals week and holiday breaks. Our office is located in Karpen Hall 019.

The Blue Banner is a designated forum for free speech and welcomes letters to the editor, considering them on basis of interest, space and timeliness. Letters and articles should be emailed to the editor-in-chief or the appropriate section editor.

Letters should include the writer's name, year in school, and major or other relationship to UNCA. Include a telephone number to aid in verification. All articles are subject to editing.