

His Paying Back Pays off Big for Students

Phil Schroeder still remembers the moral support he got in high school that helped set him on a successful life path. To honor that hand up, he calls on it for inspiration in his job as director of financial aid at Colorado's Adams State College.



Schroeder, director of financial aid, Adams State College

“Someone once said to me, ‘You can do it, and I can help.’ That’s what I want to be able to do for my students. That’s what keeps me in financial aid.”

It began when he was a geology professor teaching incarcerated (yes, prison inmates) students through an Arizona community college program. Before long, he was helping those incarcerated students

fill out their FAFSAs for Pell Grants. Soon he was the community college’s financial aid director.

“I relate financial aid to moral support; it’s just financial support,” Phil says. “To see the relief on a student’s face when you say, ‘Hey, you don’t have to worry about buying books. I’m going to get you a grant to help pay for your books.’ It’s a great feeling.”

In 2003, Phil left Arizona to take his current job at

Adams State, a southern Colorado liberal arts school in the San Luis Valley. It’s a four-year, public college, with a population of about 2,000 undergraduate and 700 graduate students. It also features Phil’s special brand of student commitment.

A highlight of the student experience is the school’s One Stop Student Service Center, envisioned by Phil and implemented by him and other staff in his first year on the job. At the Center, students can register, be admitted, apply for financial aid and receive advice – everything including formally pay their tuition and fees.

The Center’s “warm and inviting” facility is staffed by cross-trained financial aid and admissions professionals. It streamlines the entry and financing experience that can often overwhelm students by eliminating the separate (and often long) lines for registration, financial aid and admissions.

Having served as president of both the Colorado and Arizona associations of financial aid administrators, as well as serving on the boards of the Rocky Mountain and Western associations, these days Phil is content to devote himself to his staff and students. Away from work he enjoys travel – including trips to Africa and Mexico – but he also likes to just hang out in his own neck of the woods.

“I like to be in the mountains, and I like to fish. So I’m in the best place in the world,” he says.

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