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Meyer: Colleges need general requirements

The direction higher education should take this decade was the topic Monday during a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Duane Meyer, president of Southwest Missouri State University.

The panel was among events at a conference on higher education sponsored by the Council on Public Education. The conference, with a general theme of Higher Education in the '80s, was held on the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Meyer opened the session with a discussion on what higher education can do for Missourians.

He asked whether institutions should provide more majors and more specialties and whether education should provide opportunities for upward mobility. He asked about quality educational standards; specifically, the importance, as far as the state is concerned, of providing education for relatively low fees.

His panel consisted of Alice Windom, a member of the state Coordinating Board for Higher Education; state Sen. Harriet Woods, D-University City; Harold Hamilton, field representative for the national AFL-CIO, and Ed Hellyar, manager of marketing administration and personnel for the Monsanto Corp.

"It continues to be of the utmost importance that all college graduates be able to write and speak acceptable English, have an understanding of mathematics and be aware of the scientific method

and have a broad exposure to the social sciences and humanities," Meyer said.

About one-third of a college degree program is given to education courses, he said, and asked if the program should be expanded. He said in a society that must be increasingly technical, "it would be most unfortunate if we should depart from the long-standing emphasis which higher education in America has had for general-education requirements."

Meyer asked if there continued to be a need to provide an education channel for upward mobility.

Ms. Windom, who is black, said she wanted to speak on behalf of the Afro-American community.

She said education has been a vehicle for upward mobility, but it falls short in teaching an appreciation for all cultures. This should have more emphasis, she said.

She told the group a recent survey of 10,000 graduates of Missouri public institutions of higher education showed that 316 blacks had received degrees, of which 84 were from Lincoln University.

Ms. Woods said education is particularly a state function. "Our state takes education as a primary and most important function," she said.

The '80s will be the time for accountability and justification in higher education, but also will be a time of change in technology and skills, she said.