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## OUR OPINION

# COLTS puts universities in local loop

Scranton gradually has become more of a college town, due largely to growth of the University of Scranton, Marywood University and Lackawanna College, along with the ongoing development of the Commonwealth Medical College.

Economic spin-off from the growth also has grown in recent years, especially due to the medical school's role in driving downtown residential development.

But the local business community never has realized the full potential of the university communities, for a variety of reasons. The Marywood and U of S campuses, with the largest student populations, are somewhat self-contained.

A new program by the County of Lackawanna Transit System is a good start toward better integrating the campus populations into the broader local economy.

Beginning Monday, COLTS will replace a shuttle program that had been funded by Marywood and the U of S for students who attend classes on both campuses.

Like the shuttle, the service will be free for the universities' students, faculty and staff. COLTS will bill each school for the number of passengers from each. That likely will save money for the institutions, which used to pay a flat rate of about \$150,000 a year for the shuttle service.

The service will not simply be a shuttle, however. COLTS will alter some of its existing routes to include the campuses. That will give students opportunities to use the free service not just for academic purposes and social events at the two campuses, but to visit restaurants, shops and other businesses to which the routes offer access.

The universities, COLTS the city government and the business community should promote the service for that purpose. Ideally, the new arrangement will raise awareness among students of the area beyond the campuses, and raise awareness within the business community that there are largely untapped markets nearby.