

# 'U' students as residents, consumers

Attempts by Scranton City Council to shake down the University of Scranton for more than the \$175,000 it pays the city in lieu of taxes demonstrated that the city's greatest economic asset is not fully integrated into city life.

A study commissioned by the university last year conservatively estimated that the school generates about \$400 million in economic activity for the region each year.

Even so, the U of S campus long has been something of a community unto itself, even as it has grown. Those who have attempted to force the U of S to pay more to the government have failed to grasp that the best way to fully realize the school's economic impact is to more fully integrate it into the city's economy.

It is heartening that the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce, the civic advocacy group Scranton Tomorrow, and the university's Small Business Development Center and Kania School of Management are working on marketing the city to the university community.

Awareness is a big part of the issue. Many students simply don't know about life west of Jefferson Avenue.

Little things can make a big difference. New COLTS bus service geared to the University of Scranton and Marywood University, for example, will offer means for students from both schools to visit spots between campuses. And, according to the university's Office of Community Relations, incoming freshmen will receive a downtown welcome package for the Fall 2011 Family Weekend.

The new effort is particularly timely because of other developments downtown. As a new downtown residential community develops, many of the amenities — restaurants, shops and so on — also will be attractive to the growing university community.

And the university community is not alone. The Commonwealth Medical College, already a principal driver of the downtown residential developments, will greet its third class this fall. Lackawanna College also has downtown residential students.

In all, the ground is fertile for the new effort. Now, if the U of S would figure out a way to keep its graduation ceremony in Scranton rather than Wilkes-Barre Twp. ....

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