

25 ideas for



increasing
socioeconomic diversity
in
higher education



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25 ideas

Summer 2007

The 25 Ideas project is a direct extension of the Roosevelt Institution's mission to connect students' policy ideas to policymakers. Each aspect has been designed with the lawmaker in mind: from the two-page, condensed formatting, to the inclusion of concise sets of key facts and talking points. Both easy to read and easy to understand, these ideas have been distilled into small bursts of creativity and thoughtfulness. Though they been condensed here for the busy reader's convenience, several of these Ideas are also available in extended form through rooseveltinstitution.org or in our upcoming issue of the *Roosevelt Review*.

While we hope that you will enjoy reading these Ideas, they are not meant to stay on your coffee table. Some Ideas have ramifications for those who work at the federal policy level; others, at the state and municipal levels. Still others focus primarily on what universities can do. So no matter what level of government you focus on - or even if you are still a student - there is an Idea in these pages that you should consider acting on.



The Roosevelt Institution is a national student think tank with nearly 7,000 members at over 50 college campuses across the United States. Founded in 2004, the Institution strives to connect students to the policymaking process in a variety of ways through print and online publications, direct student-to-lawmaker connections, and annual conferences. The Roosevelt Institution has been featured in such publications as *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Der Spiegel*.

The Institution wishes to give special thanks to its outgoing Executive Director and co-founder, Kai Stinchcombe. Kai's enthusiasm for this project and his indefatigable energy propelled the 25 Ideas from the white board to the Roosevelt chapters, collecting hundreds of ideas and turning a wish into a reality. Since 2004, Kai's vision for the potential of his fellow students has developed into an organization that is changing the way many students study and interact with public policy. The Roosevelt Institution is truly fortunate to have had his entrepreneurial spirit, and he will be sorely missed at our offices in Washington, D.C.

R Letter from the Editors

When 150 students from across the country gathered at the Hyde Park Plenary in August of 2006 to select the new challenges for the Roosevelt Institution, no one present could have imagined the countless hours that students across the nation would devote toward developing new and exciting policy solutions that address how to increase socioeconomic diversity in higher education. As an editorial team, we are thrilled to present the finest ideas produced by Roosevelt students from across the nation, all of which present a unique or innovative way to solve some of the fundamental problems that plague our education system. These ideas represent the potential of student ideas to affect real change with specific, concrete solutions that strike at the base of the problem. The articles are designed to provide comprehensive insight in a relatively short space, and therefore should be seen as a starting point for the solution process. The list of 25 ideas in this publication is not all-inclusive, but provides a thorough introduction to some of the most salient issues in education reform.

Our challenge was to find ways to help those with social or economic disadvantage gain access to higher education through policy initiatives. As students, we naturally believe that we have unique insight into this issue, as we have recent experience navigating the numerous obstacles to higher education. In working with these articles and the information from the field, however, we discovered that despite the fact that all of these ideas are great ways to start change, none of them provide a comprehensive plan to increase socioeconomic diversity in American colleges and universities. Simply put, there is no silver bullet. As the layout for this journal demonstrates, there are several different levels from which you can address access to higher education. Some view it as a problem that must be addressed at the earliest levels of education. Others, like the contributors who emphasize high school-level programs that focus on starting a conversation between universities and students, believe that access is the key to getting more students of diverse backgrounds into higher education. Still others point to the system itself as being pivotal in determining who gets into college and who does not. It is the aim of this publication to provide a forum where all different perspectives can come together and complement each other.

In typical Roosevelt style, this publication steps away from party lines in its analysis, and we have worked hard to provide solutions that work because of that practical efficacy, not because of their partisan flavor. The diversity of political views represented by our authors has helped to enrich our efforts, and we believe it has created a debate that is essential if we are to build a better way for students to pursue their dreams.

We would like to extend our thanks to all of those that have helped and supported this project from its infancy, especially our Challenge team and those involved in helping polish these ideas from our contributors. Roosevelt has - through the efforts of a national student network - demonstrated that it is ideas that are critical to the process, and that students can contribute to the debate. Thank you and enjoy.

Sincerely,

Chandni Challa, James Elias, and Ernesto Rodriguez
Editors, Roosevelt Challenge on Diversity in Higher Education

Acknowledgments

The Roosevelt Institution recognizes and thanks the following people for their outstanding dedication to the success of this inaugural publication. Any accolades earned by this new venture are due to their guidance and aid.

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*To our friends and donors, whose continued generosity
makes the impossible happen every day,
thank you.*



25 ideas

Increasing Interest in Math and Science Among Low-Income Middle School Students

James Elias, Erika Gudmundson, George Washington University

To battle declining performance in math and science in middle school, professionals at universities across the nation will develop programs based on their current research to engage students.

Professional volunteers would spend a session with middle school students from economically disadvantaged school districts during the school day to present to them current scientific and mathematic research developments in a hands-on and engaging format. Presentations would focus on bringing exciting research straight from the source to students who would not ordinarily be exposed to the ideas. The presentations would be volunteer-based, so cost is minimal, and the scope of the programs would be any university or institution in an urban area.

KEY FACTS

- The Howard Hughes Foundation provides grants to universities to develop programs that engage students in the sciences.
- Twenty-nine percent of elementary school and middle school students perform at or above a proficient level in math and science according to standards set by the Department of Education. However, while 68 percent of elementary school students achieve basic mastery of science material, only 59 percent of middle school students perform similarly.
- Programs that develop a relationship between students and professionals create networks that can later be used toward building strong college applications.

Recent studies demonstrate that interest in the sciences is high in elementary school students, but wanes as students progress through the education system. This proposal provides a cost effective volunteer-based solution that gives students an engaging environment to experience and absorb new scientific ideas. By providing students a hands-on experience, they can develop an interest in science early on when it counts.

TALKING POINTS

- Students are continually failing to achieve in the sciences, with the United States continuing to award more science degrees to foreign students every year.
- Proficiency in the sciences diminishes as students progress through the system.
- The program is designed to develop interest among middle school students to pursue science-based education early, building a foundation for later science intensive study.

HISTORY

Programs that already exist to bring in middle school students are all over the country. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute provides grants to institutions of higher education to “address the ongoing challenge of science education reform by drawing on their unique resources to stimulate interest in science, particularly among young people.”

ANALYSIS

Funding requirements would be negligible because program participants would work on a volunteer basis. The only component of the proposal that requires funding would be the materials required for any small-scale experiments conducted in the classroom.

The program would be implemented through a partnership between a local university and the local school boards, principals, and teachers' unions. Implementation of this proposal is flexible by nature because of the liquid working arrangements in American public schools. Volunteers would be graduate students who could develop an enticing curriculum that is both cutting-edge and incorporates themes taught during the school year.

AUDIENCE

It is important to get private and public universities on board for a proposal like this by exploiting working relationships that already exist between educational institutions in the area. Other interested parties would include local school boards, principals, teachers' unions, parents, students, college admissions officers, and potential graduate students for the universities involved in the partnership.

NEXT STEPS

Potential next steps include: lobbying state legislators to approve funding for similar programs, applying to private research institutions that have sizable educational outreach departments for grant money, writing to science-friendly members of Congress for national exposure, and contacting local universities with large science departments to initiate the program.

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Equitable and Accountable Funding for Mississippi's Public K-12 Schools

Shad White, University of Mississippi

By using both a funding sharing program between school districts and a mandate that 65 percent of education appropriations be spent in the classroom, Mississippi can produce a more diverse and prepared group of high school graduates—all without requesting more money than is already allocated by the state or its localities.

The Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) is a funding formula that was implemented in 1998 in order to advance the state in terms of equitable funding for public education. However, MAEP has been significantly underfunded by the state legislature in recent years.

Some of the recalcitrance toward fully funding MAEP is due to a lack of political will, but the failure to meet the formula's requirements can also be attributed to a low tax base. Because this formula is regularly u n d e r - f u n d e d , Mississippi needs a new means of guaranteeing

that low-income children are not left behind when Mississippi's leaders lack the will and/or revenue to fully-fund MAEP. Mississippi should cap the amount every school district can tax in terms of mills (or parts per every \$1000 in taxable property) per average daily attendance of students in the district. School districts should only be

KEY FACTS

- From 1993-2003, the number of school administrators increased by 62 percent, even though there were only four percent more classroom teachers for them to supervise and 2.5 percent fewer students.
- Mississippi already ranks 20th in revenue effort dedicated to education.
- In 2003, 30.8 percent of total education funding for Mississippians came from local property taxes.
- Mississippi is one of 25 states that funds low-income districts at lower levels than high-income districts, spending an average of \$450 per classroom per year more on high-income districts than on low-income districts.
- In Texas, about \$522 million is redistributed annually to poor districts, meaning that 90 percent of Texas's students are taught in districts of roughly equal wealth.

TALKING POINTS

- Because a considerable portion of Mississippi's education funding must come from local school districts, great disparities in education funding exist between rich and poor localities.
- The primary mechanism for avoiding this disparity, the MAEP formula, is only fully funded once every five years.

allowed to tax over this cap if they redistribute a certain percentage of the revenue from the excess tax to the state or a low-income district.

Mississippians also need to be sure their tax dollars are spent wisely, and the best measure of accountability in education spending is the amount of money

that reaches the classroom (i.e. supplies, teacher/assistant salaries, field trips, or anything else that involves the direct instruction of students). Mississippi needs a law that requires 65 percent of education allocations to reach the classroom.

HISTORY

The equitable funding plan in place in Texas as a result of 1993's Senate Bill 7 is a rough model for the equitability proposal. Passed in response to an equitability lawsuit, Texas's system is effective. By 2000-2001, 90 percent of students in Texas were taught in districts of roughly equal wealth.

The "65 Percent Solution" for accountable education funding is a rapidly growing policy movement. It has been passed in New Mexico, Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, and Kansas, with many other states and leaders considering the measure.

ANALYSIS

The significant flaw in Texas's recapture program is a lack of incentive for rich districts to tax above the tax cap, so in some cases, rich districts are forced to provide fewer funds for their students than they would without the state cap, and poor districts see no benefit. Mississippi could remedy this problem by allowing rich districts to tax over the cap if they shared a certain percentage (to be set by the legislature) of the revenue gained from the excess tax with a low-income district or the state. Fear of retribution from parents in rich school districts has, in all likelihood, prevented the recapture debate from taking place, but these concerns should be partially placated by modifying Texas's program in the aforementioned way. In New Jersey, the interests of the greater good won a similar debate when over three-fourths of school districts were the beneficiaries of a revenue recapture program, meaning that the majority of New Jersey educators and parents eventually supported the policy.

Those opposing the 65 percent solution will likely be administrators in wasteful districts who stand to lose their jobs once the amount of money spent out of the classroom is cut. A significant political coalition of teachers, fiscal conservatives, parents, and business leaders can be assembled to overcome administrative complaints.

AUDIENCE

The biggest beneficiaries of the dual equitability and accountability proposal are teachers (who will see more money dedicated to their salaries), students (who will have more money for textbooks, programs, etc.), low-income school districts (who desperately need consistent funding), business leaders (who will have access to a stronger work force without paying higher taxes), and tax payers (who will get more bang for their education buck).

NEXT STEPS

Other than summoning the political will to enact these two laws, legislators must also note the concern that the recapture program is, in essence, a state property tax according to a 2005 interpretation by a Texas court. Under the Mississippi Constitution regarding property taxes (Art. 4, Sec. 70), the legislature may need to either ensure that 3/5 of its members support the policy solution in its passage or set a flexible cap that can be changed from year to year to avoid this interpretation.

State K-12 Positive Behavior Support

Kai Stinchcombe, Stanford University

States should develop statewide programs that provide positive behavior reinforcement, to prevent school discipline problems rather than simply punishing students and letting teachers focus on teaching.

Misbehavior in K-12 schools hurts every participant. The misbehaving student is often sequentially moved into more academically impoverished environments; other students are distracted, and teachers are forced to become disciplinarians. Furthermore, a costly administrative infrastructure — including the very valuable and very limited time of the school principal — is monopolized to deal with discipline problems.

A third grader acting up in class does not act up because s/he was born a “bad kid.” Most likely, s/he has not yet learned the social skills appropriate to that setting, or there is something in the classroom setting, or a learning disability, or a family issue that interferes with his or her ability to behave properly.

Unfortunately, school discipline systems focus more on punishing kids than on giving them the skills, training, and incentives to behave properly. Behavioral remediation, where it exists, typically takes the form of a fifteen-minute weekly visit to a school counselor. Just as if the student was trying to learn math by scheduling a fifteen-minute weekly chat with a math teacher, the system tends to fail the students.

KEY FACTS

- Positive Behavior Support systems have been implemented by a large number of school districts and states, including North Carolina. Vermont is currently implementing PBS.
- Discipline referrals and suspensions often drop 40-60% over the first two years that the program is implemented.
- Principals may save six full workdays worth of ten-minute visits over the course of a year.
- In schools with severe behavior problems, teacher satisfaction under PBS may increase by 60%, leading to a more experienced, stable staff.

TALKING POINTS

- When a third grader misbehaves, it represents not a personal failure, but a failure of the systems around him to equip him for the setting he is in.
- We can stop this failure by shifting the focus to preventing misbehavior, rather than just punishing it.
- Providing serious behavioral support to students pays off by reducing distraction and improving academic outcomes, reducing costly referrals to special education, and letting teachers and principals do their job rather than spend all their time on discipline.
- Rather than being transferred into special education or punished to the point of dropping out, students with behavior problems are put on a path to social and academic success.

Research points to the benefits of systems that teach and support positive behavior, rather than simply punishing negative behavior. By adopting a positive behavior support (PBS) system, individual schools, districts, and states have dramatically reduced office referrals and suspensions, increased on-task academic time, and made students, teachers, and parents more satisfied with the school.

ANALYSIS

Positive behavior support programs in a school may employ a three-tier model. The first tier is a low-intensity, school-wide misbehavior prevention program involving things like certificates of recognition for such pro-social behaviors as picking trash and putting it in the trash can. These programs are targeted to build the skills of the majority of students (80-85%) who have 0-1 office referrals.

The second tier of students (10-15% with 2-5 office referrals) typically have significant behavior problems and require intervention, such as group sessions with school psychologists to learn appropriate behaviors, just as they would learn any other skill set in a classroom setting. The goal of these sessions is to help them emulate their better-behaved classmates, rather than imitating those with more severe behavioral problems. The third tier (typically 5% with 6+ office referrals) suffers from severe behavioral problems, requiring individualized interventions.

NEXT STEPS

States typically cannot mandate PBS systems, because for PBS to succeed, schools and teachers must take ownership of the process. Instead, states should make training and support available to schools who choose to implement PBS initiatives. An effective statewide program might include three elements:

1. Software databases to track behavior problems. Understanding a problem is the key to trying to fix it. Use of statewide office referral databases can also be made mandatory and supported with a compliance stipend from the state. When schools understand how much they are spending on behavior problems, they may be more likely to try an alternative approach. Commercial and nonprofit vendors can provide tracking software such as School Wide Information System (SWIS) for the order of \$250 per school per year; SWIS takes only thirty seconds to enter a typical case.
2. Training and consulting. Initial expertise is usually provided by psychologists who conduct training in positive behavior support systems. These career experts train, support, and consult with a state team who in turn provide training to individual school districts. The appropriate size of a state team varies between states, but might be three to twelve individuals. Over time, PBS could be introduced into the state curriculum for teaching colleges and into professional development programs for teachers.
3. Support for model schools. In the first years of a statewide PBS program, schools effectively implementing positive behavior systems become teaching laboratories for the surrounding schools, where others can see how the system works and what its results are. States and the federal government both give grants to schools, and allowing those grants to be used for PBS programs might be a good way to make the money go further.

SOURCES

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Public Schools of North Carolina. "Positive Behavior Support Evaluation." <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/positivebehavior/data/evaluation/>

Diversifying Lecture Halls from the Ground-Up

Daniel Bliss, Stanford University

Increase socioeconomic diversity in higher education by improving teacher quality in America's most impoverished schools.

We propose to increase socioeconomic diversity in higher education from the ground up by increasing loan forgiveness to graduates of teacher certification programs in an effort to attract them to the neediest schools, which so often lack the administrative and financial resources to compete for and retain these teachers.

According to former Princeton President William Bowen, if American families are divided into quartiles by income, 75 percent of students at the nation's 146 most selective higher education institutions hail from the top quartile, while a mere three percent are from the bottom. Put simply, the average American college student is twenty-five times more likely to be rich than poor. Many of these low-income students have the least qualified teachers throughout their educational careers; in California, schools with more than 75 percent of their students qualifying for free or reduced lunch have, on average, more than one fourth of their teachers lacking full credentials.

KEY FACTS

- American college students are 25 times more likely to be rich than poor.
- America's most impoverished schools often lack the necessary resources to hire new teachers until after the start of the school year.
- Federal loan forgiveness and financial aid programs do not keep pace with inflation.

As Century Foundation Fellow Richard Kahlenberg concisely phrased the issue, "We cannot increase socioeconomic diversity in higher education in this country without increasing the quality of K-12 education in our most socioeconomically

TALKING POINTS

- Affirmative action programs provide mere "band-aids," short-term solutions to an institutional problem.
- Improving the entire educational system by placing the best teachers in the neediest schools will help increase the overall college admissions talent pool.

impoverished neighborhoods and cities." Placing our focus and collective efforts toward the preparation and retention of highly qualified teachers to work in our neediest schools ensures a more sustainable solution, one in which we focus on improving the academic preparation of a great many rather than creating incentives for a select few. According to recent research by nationally renowned Stanford education professor Linda Darling-Hammond, "among the strongest predictors of student failure on the [California] state tests were the proportion of uncertified teachers and a measure of teacher shortage." The disproportion of well-qualified teachers has worsened since the 1990s.

HISTORY

The concept of loan forgiveness is by no means new to the higher education scene, since for years the Federal Perkins loans and individual states and universities have been addressing varying levels of teacher shortage by forgiving some portion of new teachers' financial burden. That being said, what we are proposing here—the encouragement of massively increased loan forgiveness aimed at directly benefiting the entire American educational system—has only begun to be examined in full in recent years.

ANALYSIS

In order to bring our most troubled schools up to speed, we must incentivize the most qualified, energetic, and passionate teachers to work in them. This, of course, is a daunting task because the schools most in need of qualified teachers usually lack the administrative and financial resources to compete for and retain these teachers. However, recent data suggests that the benefits of placing graduates of the top masters and teacher certification programs in schools populated by students of the bottom income quartile cannot be underestimated.

One possible incentive that could be offered to attract top teachers to struggling schools is educational loan forgiveness, through federal programs like Pell Grants. Federal Pell Grants not only provide funding to undergraduates with financial need, but can also be put toward easing the financial burden imposed upon graduates of top teacher certification programs who want to work in struggling schools.

AUDIENCE

Pell Grant increases are already being discussed at the federal level. In October 2006, then-House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi spoke at Georgetown, pledging to restore Pell Grant funding—which the current administration cut by \$12.5 billion this fiscal year—to previous levels, should the Democrats retake the House of Representatives. In early February 2007, President Bush and the Department of Education proposed an increase in Pell Grant funding for the 2008 fiscal year.

Some top universities have also created internal initiatives to address this issue through support of K-12 education. A perfect example of such an effort is the recently announced Stanford Challenge, in which Stanford President John Hennessy pledged \$125 million to improving K-12 education, including the brand new Stanford-Avery Loan Forgiveness Program, which will refund up to \$20,000 worth of student loans to graduates of the Stanford Teacher Education Program, beginning with the Class of 2008.

NEXT STEPS

Meaningful, pointed pressure needs to be applied quickly and diligently to the primary sources of student loan disbursement, namely individual universities and the federal government. Members of Congress, Department of Education officials, and leaders of university schools of education and offices of admissions and financial aid should all consider the idea that the creation of loan forgiveness programs for graduates of teacher certification programs will vastly increase the college admissions talent pool across the board.

The “17 Year-Old Game Theorist” Dilemma

Tim Krueger, Eric Smith, and Simma Reingold, Cornell University

School districts with low college application rates should implement a mandatory class in which high school juniors learn how to navigate the college and scholarship application processes, completing applications as coursework.

One of the main reasons for low college matriculation rates in impoverished communities is the complexity of the college and scholarship application processes, which Heather Oesterreich suggests forces 17-year-old kids to act as game theorists. Without the advisory strength and social capital available in wealthy school districts, an unknown number of these potential college students forgo higher education for reasons that can be remedied at minimal cost. Currently, only 29% of low-income students with the highest test scores attain a bachelor's degree, compared to 74% of similarly high-achieving, high-income students (Fox et. al. 2005).

This program would reach a greater number of students than would optional information sessions or college fairs. It could also encourage and draw parents into the college application process by sending home forms (to be signed by parents) explaining the financial aid available for low-income families. At the root of this classroom program is its adaptability. For instance, it could work as either a semester- or year-long course, depending on the course structure of each high school. It would not necessarily require the creation of an additional teaching position, and could even be taught by a rotating staff from a variety of areas. Alternatively, this curriculum could be integrated into a new or existing class dealing with personal finance or vocation. We are of the opinion that vocational classes often communicate the message

KEY FACTS

- Only 29 percent of low-income students with the highest standardized test scores attain a bachelor's degree, compared to 74 percent of similarly high-achieving, high-income students (Fox et al 2005).
- Perfect information cannot be guaranteed by simply putting a FAFSA form and a college catalog in front of a student. The skills for filling out these forms include a significant amount of financial literacy, as well as the ability to write well in a very concise essay format. Schools can teach these skills just like any other lesson plan, but they must dedicate time and effort to do so.

TALKING POINTS

- This program's great strength is its adaptability. It could work as either a semester- or year-long course, does not require the creation of an additional teaching position, and could even be taught by a rotating staff from a variety of departments.
- This course could be combined with other material on financial planning, giving all students the tools to succeed in practical aspects of life regardless of their plans after high school.

that disadvantaged kids are not expected to go to college; this program would therefore also work to deconstruct social norms against college application.

HISTORY

A variety of methods can encourage students to apply to colleges. Some programs have focused on information dissemination, while others try to get parents involved in the process. Some programs encourage kids in elementary school and junior high school to start thinking about college (Oesterreich 2000). However, at this point there are no programs that include college application as part of a course curriculum.

AUDIENCE

Local governments and school boards in urban and rural areas with low college matriculation rates should push this form of college prep course. Although government need not be a primary actor in such a program, its involvement would surely encourage the success of this program. Moreover, higher education is strongly linked to local economic development (Drucker and Goldstein 2007), and thus is in the immediate interest of any city. Finally, this program will benefit universities as broader application pools produce a more qualified and diverse group of candidates. For this reason, it would be in the interests of universities to contribute funds to such programs.

NEXT STEPS

The first step is to adapt this program in accordance to the existing curriculum and education policy of each potential school district (i.e. look for existing courses into which this program could be integrated and approach teachers who are well-suited to instruct such a course). A school board or PTA committee created to oversee the process could accomplish this. Next, local universities should be approached for any necessary funding. Need for preliminary research would be minimal, as students would research scholarship and college application opportunities as part of the course.

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Curbing the Dropout Crisis

Diona Howard, Temple University

Create alternative college preparatory high schools for at-risk high school and graduating middle school students; each alternative school partners with a local university. Simultaneously, this policy increases the national legal dropout age to 18.

While dropping out of high school is a problem in the U.S. as a whole, it is an epidemic within communities of color. One third of all high school students, and nearly one half of all African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans, fail to graduate from public high school. Many students drop out with less than two years left to complete their degrees.

KEY FACTS

- This national initiative, if carried out effectively, can change the future career prospects of an at-risk student, reduce the dropout rate, and reduce strain on taxpayers by virtue of adding more well-educated, trained assets to society and the tax base.
- This change could impact the one-half of all African American, Latino, and Native American students who fail to graduate from public high school.

HISTORY

There are several reasons why students drop out. A recent survey of high school dropouts shows that 47 percent of respondents said that classes were not interesting, and 69 percent said that they were not motivated or inspired to work hard. Others gave personal reasons for dropping out: 32 percent needed to work to make money; 26 percent became parents; and 22 percent became caregivers. Furthermore, many students may believe that classes are irrelevant; sociologist Dr. Elijah Anderson suggests that teenage cultural norms, such as a disregard for the importance of an academic education, can adversely impact behavior and attitudes toward education. Individuals

who drop out of high school are more likely to be: unemployed; poor; in prison or on death row; unhealthy; divorced; and single with children who eventually drop out as well.

TALKING POINTS

- In order to reduce the threat that dropout rates have on the economic, political, and social fabric of communities of color, we must intervene before students begin to disengage from school.
- Studies show that 59 to 65 percent of dropout students surveyed missed classes continuously in the year before they dropped out. Early identification of this disengagement can better direct outreach efforts that help keep students in school.

Many economic and social disadvantages result from dropping out of high school. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that dropouts aged 21 to 24 earned a median income of \$16,430 in

1999, while high school graduates in the same age group earned a median income of \$19,659. Curbing the dropout rate requires two simultaneous interventions. First, graduating middle school students who have shown signs of truancy, bad behavior, and poor grades should be enrolled in an alternative high school program (AHSP).

Ideally, the AHSP should be partnered with or housed on a university campus. The mission should be to engage students academically and personally, encouraging them to further their education. Academic guidance counselors, teachers, principals, and case managers would be essential to success, since the curricula and graduation requirements in the AHSP must minimally comply with state education standards. That way, students meet the criteria required to enter and succeed in a state college. For example, a one-year program in Philadelphia, designed to help high school dropouts earn their high school diploma, is an example of how efficiently alternative schools can work. Each year it graduates the majority of its students, many of whom pursue further education.

Second, the legal dropout age should be raised from 16 to 18. Several states have considered raising the dropout age; New Mexico, Connecticut, Louisiana, New York, Texas, and Vermont have recently passed such legislation. Every state should follow their lead. Kirk Lewis, Superintendent of Pasadena Independent School District of Texas, attributes his district's low dropout rate of 1.6 percent to doing these two things. Moreover, many of Lewis' students go on to college.

ANALYSIS

1. Although many politicians have identified dropout rates as a problem across the country, there is no uniform method that accurately portrays the nature and dimensions of the problem.
2. Sufficient funding for AHSPs would be required in order to have a positive effect. It will be difficult for politicians to persuade taxpayers to pay upfront for AHSPs. In addition, sustaining interest long enough for politicians and the general public to keep AHSPs running efficiently may be difficult. Kirk Lewis noted that that creating an alternative campus was "costly but worth it."
3. Keeping students engaged in AHSPs that are partnered with or housed on selected universities may be difficult. Some students may naturally adapt to the different setting; other students may feel overwhelmed and uncomfortable in that environment and disengage even more from academics; case managers would be crucial in addressing this scenario.
4. Breaking the stronghold of the code of the streets and the anti-intellectualism ideology would not be an easy task. However, offering an alternative code in combination with a pro-intellectual community that provides both social and material support could make all the difference in a young adult's life.

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Utilize and Improve Non-University Options for Post-Secondary Education

This article has been retracted and is no longer available. Any statements or claims once made in the article should be considered void and nonrepresentative of the author or of the Roosevelt Institution.

Urban Debate Programs for Minority and Disadvantaged Youth

Emily Renzelli, West Virginia University

In order to promote diversity in higher education, policymakers should increase state and federal funding for urban debate programs and implement such programs in disadvantaged areas where they do not currently exist.

The United States government has been struggling to find ways to increase minority and low-income representation in higher education; however, individual efforts, such as urban debate leagues, are starting to break through barriers that keep students from attending college.

In 1985, the first urban debate programs were created in Chicago and Philadelphia. Since then, programs have emerged in sixteen major U.S. cities. These programs have provided students with the

tools necessary to succeed in school. Debate requires students to thoroughly research both sides of a pressing issue and formulate ideas on how to address the issue. Additionally, students have the ability to advocate their ideas in a competitive setting, which gives them real-world advocacy skills.

Urban debate programs are currently established in seventeen major metropolitan areas in the United States, but are having trouble reaching all of the students in their area due to a lack of funding and resources.

TALKING POINTS

- Urban Debate Leagues have the ability to curb behavioral problems and improve the educational performance of students.
- Seventy-five percent of urban debaters attend college.
- While disadvantaged students everywhere in the United States could benefit from debate leagues, access is only given to those students in major metropolitan areas.
- Urban debate programs need federal and state funding in order to survive.

KEY FACTS

- African American and Hispanic students have a nearly 36 percent high school drop out rate, and only 49 percent of African American and 33 percent of Hispanic 25-29 year olds have completed some level of college education.
- Urban debate programs currently in existence have been reversing this trend by giving 12,000 students the chance to debate, and to attend one of 70 universities that seek out urban debaters.
- It takes approximately \$200,000 a year to implement and maintain an urban debate program, and this is stopping several programs from developing.

In order for urban debate programs to reach their full effectiveness, they should be implemented in all areas where there is a high percentage of minority and low-income students, and they should be supported with funding from the state and federal government.

HISTORY

Urban debate leagues are supported by the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues. The NAUDL manages and ensures the effectiveness of the urban debate programs currently in existence.

Each program has its own success story, which gives hope for the success of new programs in the future. For example, students from the New York Urban Debate League have been recruited by the nation's most prestigious undergraduate institutions and have received financial support from the four million dollars in scholarships available to urban debaters. Additionally, success in debate does not end after graduation, which has been shown by former Baltimore Urban Debaters, who ranked among the top competitors in this year's intercollegiate CEDA National Debate Tournament.

ANALYSIS

Currently, less than one percent of urban debate leagues' total resources comes from federal funding. In order for these programs to survive and for new programs to emerge, financial support must increase. On the federal level, funding can come from earmarks and programs such as Titles one and five, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Elementary and Secondary School Education Act—and federal funds need to increase by ten percent. On the state and local level, money can come from city councils, community development programs, and school boards.

AUDIENCE

State and federal lawmakers and active community leaders could be instrumental in securing the resources necessary to expand the urban debate league program. Colleges and universities with active debate programs can also become involved in lobbying state and local governments to increase funding for debate programs.

NEXT STEPS

Individuals who would like to fund an urban debate league currently in existence can contact the National Association of National Urban Debate Leagues at (312) 427-8101. Community members and teachers can also create their own debate programs; NAUDL provides the resources necessary to train coaches and students.

Lawmakers who would like to enact policies that promote the creation of urban debate programs should increase federal and state funding for these programs and provide incentives for college debate programs to assist in building programs in their area.

SOURCES

* A full list of sources is available upon request

Reinventing Year-Round School: Developing Parental Outreach Solutions

James Elias, Ernesto Rodriguez, George Washington University

A strategy to inform parents of the benefits of year-round school schedules should be developed to build support for increasing year-round education.

The year-round school model has existed since the late 1960s, but has failed to gain widespread appeal because of a wide array of issues, some stemming from misconceptions among administrators and parents about the nature of the schedule. Policymakers need to develop a strategy to address these concerns and establish programs that inform parents and give administrators methods to implement year-round school schedules.

HISTORY

Year-round school has been an option in school districts for decades. Five percent of schools in the United States are on year-round schedules but the idea has failed to gain traction, largely due to parental misunderstanding of the system and poor presentation of the benefits to disadvantaged groups. Select institutions have made the move toward year-round schedules, usually by employing charter schools where parents are more involved in the development of curriculum, as a laboratory for developing methods of implementation. Charter schools have taken up year-round programs as effective methods for reducing summer brain drain. Harris Cooper's landmark study, *The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review*, illustrates the extreme importance of changing the school year schedule to help students retain the information they learn. Hess has noted that the summer brain drain is especially damaging for low-income students, as they "lose significant academic ground in the summertime, while their more advantaged peers—those more likely to read and attend pricey summer camps—do not." Furthermore, the long summer vacation creates a financial burden for low-income families; according to the Urban Institute, "41 percent of working families with school-age children pay for child care during the summer, typically spending about eight percent of their summertime earnings [to that end]."

KEY FACTS

- Parent organizations have long opposed year-round programs because of objections over the loss of family time during the summers. Most year-round programs still provide five to seven weeks of vacation in the summer for students to go on vacation and attend summer camps.
- According to the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, in 2004 only 6.8 percent of white non-Hispanics were high school "status dropouts"—i.e., people who were not enrolled in high school or had not completed a high school accreditation program (GED recipients are counted as having completed high school). 11.8 percent of black non-Hispanics are status dropouts and 23.8 percent of Hispanics are status dropouts.

ANALYSIS

The failure of year-round schedules in gaining widespread appeal is the product of a lack of information among parents, teachers, and administrators. The government at all levels must make an earnest effort toward educating these actors about the costs and benefits of a year round schedule, and must be willing to modify the action to specific community needs. If these actors are able to understand how year-round school can enhance a student's educational experience, they may be more willing to adopt this kind of schedule. Costs associated with this sort of information drive are minimal. It would require school boards to hold informational sessions at local PTA meetings, and provide materials that outline the specifics of the schedule for parents to take home and discuss.

TALKING POINTS

- Hilary Pennington of the Center for American Progress has noted that “student surveys suggest that the most exciting extended school options are those that help them advance towards their postsecondary aspirations by giving them access to work experience and to college credit.” Additionally, Frederick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute notes that “most industrialized nations offer no more than seven consecutive weeks of vacation.”
- about 30% of the working-age population will be black or Hispanic, a figure which has doubled since 1980.

NEXT STEPS

Legislators must find ways to provide funds for these kinds of programs to educate the local communities about year-round schedules. Laws that set school schedules in the traditional format and do not allow for modification would need to be revoked and replaced with a more flexible statute that gives

the local communities more control in making decisions. New and existing charter schools could continue to function as experimental institutions that show how adoption of year-round schooling can help improve student achievement.

SOURCES

* A full list of sources is available upon request

Financially Preparing Low-income Students for College

Nick Hillman, Indiana University

Create federally funded college savings accounts for every elementary school student eligible for free and reduced lunch; participants would use their accounts to pay for college.

Colleges and universities are one of our nation's greatest assets. These institutions produce the talent that will lead us into the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. Unfortunately, the future holds a grim outlook for low-income students because they are being priced out of college and denied the opportunity to earn their degrees. In order to close socioeconomic gaps and remain globally competitive, our country must encourage more students from all walks of life to succeed in college and lead our nation into the ever-changing global economy. In the next 10 to 20 years, the imperative to increase college access will only continue to grow as the baby boomer generation retires and the workforce demands new, advanced skills.

KEY FACTS

- In 2005, more than 17 million low-income K-12 students participated in free and reduced lunch programs.
- Only 16 percent of low-income 8th graders in 1988 had earned their bachelor degrees by 2000; conversely, 67 percent of their high-income classmates had earned their bachelor degree during that time.
- By investing \$500 annually for all 17 million students eligible for free and reduced lunch, the federal government would spend a maximum of \$8.5 billion per year to improve college affordability for low-income students.

How will federal policy help prepare students for these challenges? One solution is to target low-income students early in their academic careers and grant them with financial support to help prepare them for college. Creating federal college savings accounts for every low-income elementary school student will help build a college-going culture, reduce financial barriers, empower individuals to get out of poverty, and provide incentives for both K-12 and college success – one student at a time.

TALKING POINTS

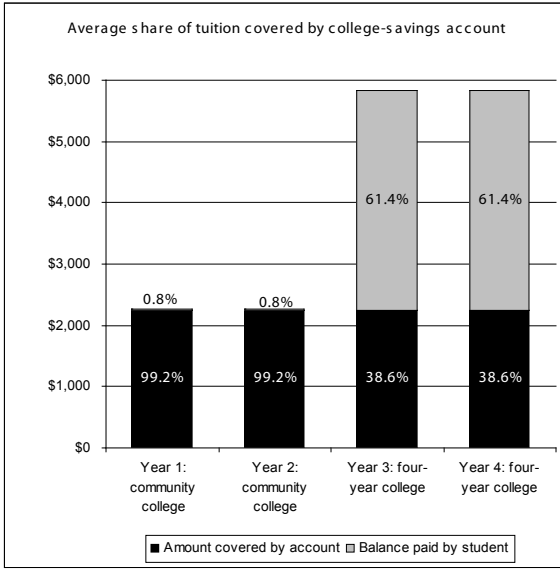
- Demographic trends for the United States indicate that we need to improve college access and increase enrollment levels, particularly for low-income students, in order to remain globally competitive.
- Providing incentives for at-risk students *early* in their academic careers will create a college-going culture, improve high school graduation rates, and increase college-going rates.
- Savings accounts will reduce student debt burden, as students would rely less on student loans to pay for college.

HISTORY

Dating back to Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the federal government has taken an active role in helping low-income students pay for college via work-study, subsidized loans, and need-based awards such as Pell Grants. Although education policy is traditionally in the domain of the states, the federal government plays an

important role by providing student financial assistance. No federal program currently prepares K-12 students financially for college via individualized savings accounts.

ANALYSIS



If the federal government grants \$500 annually to every K-12 student participating in free and reduced lunch programs (in addition to a \$2,000 grant upon high school graduation) hundreds of thousands more low-income students could attend college. Upon high school completion, the saving accounts would provide approximately \$2,250 annually for four years to help students pay tuition. Under this plan, students would be able to earn an associates degree from a community college without paying tuition, after which they could transfer to a state four-year college. Upon transferring to a four-year college, students would

be able to use the balance of their accounts to cover part of their tuition.

This plan would help accomplish three important goals: a) increase college-going rates, b) make college more affordable for low-income students, and c) empower all students to reach their potential. The federal college savings plan would be a cost-effective solution, as it would cost less than the Pell Grant program while benefiting more students: this proposal would cost \$8.5 billion per year and benefit 17 million students, while Pell Grants currently cost \$12.6 billion per year and benefit 5.4 million students.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps involve developing partnerships between the Department of Agriculture (administrators of free and reduced lunch programs) and the Department of Education to determine the feasibility of creating savings accounts. Also developing a cost-benefit analysis of this proposal would be particularly helpful. This plan requires shared responsibility from educators, business leaders, federal and state policymakers, parents and students.

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Reducing Special Education Contention with Independent Expertise

Grant Lea, Pepperdine University

Enhancing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) structure to add a child advocate would help ensure that the student's best interests are met and that his/her potential for higher education is fully developed. This plan of action will increase socioeconomic diversity throughout the education system.

A 2001 presidential commission concluded that in special education, “process [is] above results, and bureaucratic compliance [is] above student achievement, excellence and outcomes.”

A paradigm shift must occur to allow parents and districts to emphasize helping disabled children instead of engaging in fruitless tugs-of-war.

Similar programs have been attempted in the San Francisco Bay Area and Orange County, California, meeting with different degrees of success. When

correctly implemented, a child advocate is an excellent program resource, offering significant long-term benefits and minimal short-term costs.

KEY FACTS

- 65.4 percent of households with persons with disabilities have annual incomes of \$25,000 or less.
- The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that all disabled children receive a free and appropriate education to “prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.”
- 683,178 children in California’s public school system, or 11 percent, are special education students.
- Individualized Education Plans (IEP) are developed to address the unique needs of each disabled child.
- Adversarial relationships between parents and school districts in the IEP process obstruct the child’s education, limit his/her potential, and increase district costs.

ANALYSIS

Six million children in the nation’s public schools (14 percent) are enrolled in special education. In California, 683,178 children (11 percent) are special education students. The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amendments addressed contention in the IEP process, requiring states to create

TALKING POINTS

- Congress allows states to provide the disabled with more rights than those guaranteed under federal law.
- The IDEA 2004 mandates that states create mechanisms to reduce adversarial sentiments in the IEP process.
- Requiring that local education agencies (LEA) provide for a child advocate position would reduce both contention and legal costs, helping to ensure a solution in which the child’s best interests are met.

states to create

mechanisms reducing adversarial sentiments and promoting dispute resolution.

However, disagreements are still the major obstacle to optimal Individualized Education Plans. Enhancing the IEP structure to promote collaboration would help ensure that a child's optimal future is possible. Legislatures should require school districts to set up independent child advocate positions. When districts and parents deadlock, a statewide/regional/county manager would assign a child advocate professional as a member of the IEP team. She or he would intervene to make specific recommendations arising out of her/his participation in the process, which would be a prerequisite for judicial review. Costs associated with this policy would be at least partially offset by reduced legal expenses. Also, disabled students who receive necessary educational services will be more capable of achieving independence and making their own societal contribution.

AUDIENCE

Disabled children enrolled in public education, their immediate and extended families, and the school districts providing their educational services would directly benefit from this proposed policy. California is the ideal state to institute such a program because several districts within the state are already experimenting with it.

NEXT STEPS

The necessary infrastructure exists in California. Advocates will be additional IEP team members and could be special education advocates, former educators or administrators possessing unique understanding of services and facilities available in the county or region. Real and perceived impartiality is critical; costs would be paid by the state's general fund to eliminate potential district influence. The County Boards of Education could oversee the program because they are independently elected public officials not influenced by districts or parents.

SOURCES

* A full list of sources is available upon request

Tax Cuts for Public School Teachers

Troy Autin and Ray Forrester, Louisiana State University

Providing tax cuts to public school teachers will provide a 'backdoor incentive' for the recruitment of new teachers and the retention of veteran educators.

There will be a need for many new teachers in the United States over the next ten years, as large numbers of teachers are expected to retire and enrollments are expected to increase. William Hussar, an economist from the National Center of Educational Statistics, examined this need using an algebraic model with no econometric analysis. Using age-specific continuation rates of teachers from several different Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS) of the National Center for Education Statistics, Hussar predicted how

KEY FACTS

- Large numbers of teachers are expected to retire within the very near future, while student enrollments are expected to increase.
- Providing a 5 percent tax cut (2.5 percent state, combined with a matching 2.5 percent federal) to an average public school teacher salary of \$36,596 would provide an estimated \$2329.85 in “take home” salary.
- Unlike blanket salary increases in the past, the tax cut will be surgical because it provides an increase that mirrors local cost of living.

many teachers will continue teaching from one year to another. From the data, the National Center for Education Statistics has concluded that projections for the number of newly hired public school teachers needed by 2008–09 range from 1.7 million to 2.7 million. Some of these new teachers will be needed to replace those leaving the profession and additional teachers will be needed in order to keep staffing parity with increased enrollment rates. Incentives such as loan forgiveness and tax cuts can provide the kinds of tangible fiscal incentives that encourage people to enter a field like education, whose financial payoff is generally assumed to be low in comparison to other potential careers. A small tax cut will provide an incentive that, paired with other on-going programs, will help in the effort to retain current teachers and persuade others to consider a career in education.

ANALYSIS

The need for teachers is paramount today, and the need will only be exacerbated by the continued retirement of teachers within the ages of 52 and 62. The current job market also affords a multitude of opportunities to recent college graduates, who are consistently lured into more lucrative employment opportunities. Individual states presently offer numerous incentives for prospective teachers in the form of loan forgiveness programs and grant allocations. Moreover, states provide mentoring programs, such

as the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program, for those choosing to pursue a career in education.

However, several deficiencies remain which have resulted in the current teacher shortage. For example, several loan forgiveness programs provide relief only for teachers specializing in mathematics and physical science, stalling the potential for growth in the number of language arts and social science educators. Although maths and sciences are increasingly at the forefront of the national push for education curriculum reform, the dearth of qualified teachers for the social sciences and languages remains a major problem for many school districts.

TALKING POINTS

- With the retirement of the baby boomer generation, the job market in education will be wide open by 2017.
- As the field becomes depleted, school systems must find new ways to recruit college students for careers in education.
- These recruitment strategies should not adversely impact retention rates of veteran educators.
- This can be presented as a “backdoor raise” that the profession desperately needs.

By implementing some degree of universal tax relief for public educators, this field can increase its competitive advantage on the job market and reduce the opportunity cost that many would-be teachers face while considering their future careers.

NEXT STEPS

Although individual states are a natural place to institute changes such as this, the federal government could conceivably do a great service to the U.S. teaching profession as a whole by sponsoring this relatively minor change to the tax code. While demanding improved performance from the nation’s most challenged schools, the federal government should also incentivize entry into and retention within the teaching industry, so that teachers do not feel that more is constantly being demanded of them without a corresponding increase in public investment. Improving teacher salaries in this way would have a significant marginal benefit for the teachers, demonstrating the nation’s commitment to improving conditions for both students and educators and increasing job satisfaction in ways that could have a beneficial impact on the classroom itself.

SOURCES

* Statistics were found using The Center of Education Reform; www.edreform.com as well as William Hussar’s report for the National Center of Education Statistics, “Predicting the Need of Newly Hired Teachers in the United States to 2008-2009”; <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999026.pdf>

Adequate Yearly Progress at the Congressional District Level

Chandni Challa, Amanda Adams, Marisa Roman, Alexander Rugas, University of Virginia

By applying Adequate Yearly Progress at the Congressional district level, funds and resources will be more equally distributed as richer counties work to help bring poorer counties up to par.

Students in underprivileged schools are less likely to graduate and attend college than their peers in wealthier districts. The difference in education between these two groups often reflects the difference in funding available to them. We need to provide the most funding where it is needed and ensure that no school in any district lacks sufficient provisions.

KEY FACTS

- As of 2003, 48,541,000 students were enrolled in school in the United States.
- 14.9 million of those students attend Title 1 schools (58 percent of all public schools are Title 1).
- As of 2005, Title I grants to local education agencies would be funded at \$13.3 billion, which still falls about seven billion dollars short of the promised amount.
- The Educational Budget for 2006 was \$57.6 billion; President Bush only requested \$54.4 billion for 2007.

Individual schools and their districts are already required to attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) levels as defined and mandated by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act. Schools with the money and resources necessary to meet these requirements have little to worry about, but schools that lack the ability to make AYP must suffer the consequences, consequences which ultimately damage students' educations.

Funding needs to be distributed on need-based criteria—the “haves” must be compelled to share with the “have-nots.” Annual Yearly Progress requirements should be met according to congressional districts, not school districts or individual schools. In doing so, school districts within a particular congressional district would work together and share valuable resources to ensure that AYP is met. Wealthier districts would cut excessive spending and redistribute their funds to the needier districts. Poorer districts would be required to put this funding directly into classroom instruction so that test scores can be improved.

TALKING POINTS

- Superintendents in congressional districts already meet to exchange ideas for school improvement—now they would be working to implement these ideas, not just suggesting them.
- More money put into instruction means that students are better prepared for college.
- Higher graduation rates will be one result of better classroom education.

HISTORY

Currently, the No Child Left Behind Act allocates funding based on the performance of individual schools. Any school that fails to achieve the AYP for two consecutive years is identified as a school that “needs improvement.” Such a school is required to offer their students the opportunity to transfer to other,

more proficient schools. If after three years a school still hasn't met AYP requirements, they must offer supplemental instruction for students, such as afterschool tutoring. If a school does not make progress after five years, under the guidelines the state is forced to take corrective action by reorganizing the school, hiring new faculty and staff and potentially extending the school year.

In terms of funding, the Secretary of Education in each state has the authority to withhold funding from any school that does not meet the specified standards. As such, the No Child Left Behind Act strives to change the education system by implementing a carrot and stick policy for schools and school districts. The idea is that the fear of losing funding will motivate schools to work to raise their scores.

ANALYSIS

Standards are an important tool to ensure performance. Without them, there would be no means to measure public school education. While standards are indeed an important component in improving our education system, the No Child Left Behind Act is flawed in its implementation and accreditation requirements for meeting such standards. The quality of a public school depends very heavily on the wealth of families that pay into it, because public schools are funded by those families' taxes. As such, schools in poor districts do not have the same amount of revenue that schools in richer districts do. And as a result, poor schools instantly start off at a disadvantage. The No Child Left Behind Act actually perpetuates this discrepancy by denying funding to schools that already have a low source of income, creating a cyclical pattern where good schools become better and poor schools become poorer. By requiring entire congressional districts to meet accreditation standards, both rich and poor communities will have to work together to make sure all schools in their district are meeting the accreditation requirements. In addition, by segmenting a state's accreditation requirements by congressional district, politicians will have to take a more active role in maintaining high education standards.

AUDIENCE

Students, parents, teachers, and legislators alike have a vested interest in promoting a better education system in their communities. Students and parents will be interested in this proposal because it ensures the best possible training for college. Teachers will be interested in this policy because increasing the quality of public schools means less people will seek substitutes such as private schools or home schooling. As a result, their salaries will most likely increase, enticing high quality professionals to seek employment in public education. Legislators will be interested because better schools mean more qualified and motivated workers. Workers bring revenue to a locality increasing the overall standard of living in a given area.

NEXT STEPS

Much has been said about the No Child Left Behind Act. Many want to eradicate it altogether while others want to create more stringent requirements. In order for this proposal to really work, an individual would have to convince superintendents and school boards to get behind this project. Although it will require more work on the part of the school board, in the end this proposal will ensure that schools are more than adequately preparing students for college and beyond.

A Campaign for “Wealth Blind” Admissions

Rachel Rybaczuk, University of Massachusetts

Press higher education institutions to adopt “wealth blind” admissions policies that admit students based on merit, not based on legacy, family wealth, or celebrity status.

For several decades, there has been a divisive national debate over affirmative action policies in higher education. Yet there has been little serious discussion about the privileged access some students have to colleges and universities as a result of legacy, wealth, sports, or celebrity status. As the cost of education rises, college admissions departments are under enormous pressure to look for “development admits,” students whose wealthy parents will donate substantially to the institution or bring celebrity cache to its halls. Some college development offices put together their own lists of “development cases” for admission, even when they are less academically qualified.

KEY FACTS

- Legacy admissions dominate 13 percent of the entering class at Harvard. At Notre Dame, they average between 21 and 24 percent.
- In the 1990s, Duke University admitted over 100 students a year who would have been turned away without pressure from the development office because they had family money.
- Alumni contributed \$7.1 billion to higher education in 2005, representing 27.7 percent of all private giving to colleges.

Most people think that sports scholarships go largely to lower-income and minority students to play basketball. But at many private colleges, alumni have established scholarships for elite sports such as crew, equestrian, fencing, and polo. These elite sports scholarships are another form of affirmative action for the privileged. The cumulative impact of these admissions preferences is to fill the seats of entering classes with the sons and daughters of alumni, wealthy or celebrity families, and recipients of elite sport scholarships. More deserving students without wealth or connections are left standing at the college gate.

TALKING POINTS

- Leveraging the small number of existing policies that bar non-merit based legacy admissions could create an effective “peer pressure” movement in higher education.
- Utilizing campus organizing brings students into the process of addressing social class inequality in higher education.

HISTORY

A number of top colleges and universities boast that they are “need blind,” meaning they offer enough financial aid so that non-affluent students can afford to attend. But they are not “wealth blind.” The admissions preferences given to the wealthy and connected undermine excellence, equality of opportunity and meritocracy. There are institutions in higher education that bar non-

merit based legacy admissions, such as Berea College, the University of Texas, and Cal-Tech, which can serve as reference points for this broader vision.

In 2003, as the Supreme Court was ruling on the University of Michigan affirmative action case, a great deal of attention was focused on the injustice of legacy admissions as a form of “white affirmative action.” Senator Kennedy began talk of legislation, which greatly agitated what Golden calls the “legacy establishment.” Clearly there is recognition of this issue but no concrete action has been taken.

ANALYSIS

Abolishing wealth-based admissions will increase diversity on college campuses, which benefits students, faculty, and staff. Having integrity in the admissions process will uphold the standard of excellence and meritocracy integral to most college’s pedagogical and philosophical missions. A wealth-blind admission policy addresses the hidden privileges available to the wealthy that uphold the inequality prevalent in higher education.

There may be backlash in the form of public criticism in the media from politicians, public relations offices on behalf of shortsighted administrators worried about their funding base, alumni, and the current beneficiaries of these policies. Anticipating and responding to this criticism by engaging the media will be an integral part of this campaign. Generating publicity can serve to broaden the prevalent discourse on equality that focuses on disadvantage to now include the “over-advantage” that makes up the other end of the spectrum. A wealth blind admissions campaign will go a long way toward making unearned privilege and over-advantage visible. This visibility is the first step in dismantling these unfair advantages. The initial organizing effort would include the publication and dissemination of materials to college campuses, as well as organizing efforts. A preliminary budget for materials and a paid student organizer to get the project underway would be approximately \$6,000.

NEXT STEPS

Tactically, we should simultaneously press for reform legislation and advance a voluntary code of conduct that universities and colleges could adopt in relation to admissions. The threat of government intervention would ultimately move higher education institutions to change their practices (and give them cover with their alumni). The publicity garnered by congressional hearings about proposed legislation will draw enormous media attention, publicity, and visibility to the need for wealth blind admissions. Colleges will complain loudly about government meddling, and may condemn advocates for being unconstructive. But we should understand that this is part of the process of change.

It would be a victory if an initial number of colleges and universities developed and adopted a “Wealth Blind Admissions Code of Conduct.” Then a campaign could move to pressure individual institutions to adopt the Code. The preparation and dissemination of an *Organizing Around Class on Campus* toolkit could mobilize current students to address class issues on campus—between students, faculty and staff, as well as with the administration. Additionally, training student organizers to work with individual students, student groups and student government will generate a movement to put pressure on admissions, development, and administrators’ policies and practices.

Addressing the University of California Diversity Crisis

Maria Spring, University of California at Los Angeles

The University of California diversity crisis can be solved by a joint effort by the UC Regents and students at the ten individual UC campuses. If the UC Regents were to implement a Diversity Commission to serve as a UC-wide administrative body in addition to 10 individual campus commissions, diversity can be increased.

Since the passing of Proposition 209, efforts to address this crisis in diversity have been minimal. Although some contend that the UC system has seen incremental change recently, the overwhelming and unfortunate trend has been towards a less-diverse UC system, and the few recent gains are not statistically significant. Outreach programs in local schools target low-income areas, not minority populations specifically. This should change. Urgent action is still needed make university education available to all as a step towards achieving racial equality in California.

KEY FACTS

- The University of California system is experiencing a diversity crisis. With the elimination of affirmative action under California Proposition 209 in 1996, already underrepresented minorities are disappearing from UC campuses at alarming rates.
- At UC San Diego, African-Americans made up only one percent of the class of 2006, while they constitute roughly seven percent of California's population.

HISTORY

The UC-wide Diversity Commission would focus on policy analysis and research. The campus-specific commissions would consist of four components: community service, scholarship, admissions, and research. The community service component would place UC students in local schools. A new graduation requirement of 100 hours of community service over four years for undergraduates, and 50 hours over two years for transfer and graduate students would generate roughly 5,000,000 hours to effect diversity each year at the ten UCs. Primarily, volunteers would work with outreach programs to provide tutoring services and college admissions preparation. Outreach programs

TALKING POINTS

- Although affirmative action has been outlawed, the UC system must maintain student diversity if it is to provide equitable access to higher education and truly represent California's population.
- African-American and Latino/a enrollment at the UC's top universities, UCLA and Berkeley, has plummeted by 50 percent in the past eleven years.

to high schools and community colleges were established over 30 years ago to prepare and recruit underrepresented minority students in low-income schools, but recently California has cut outreach funding in half.

A school that does not meet the community service requirement

would make up for this funding gap and allow for expansion of the outreach effort. The scholarship committee would work with a private organization to seek funding from private donors for scholarships that target underrepresented minorities, and administer those monies. Working with a private organization would ensure Proposition 209 compliance.

The admissions component would link the students served by outreach with University Admissions. Currently there is no formal relationship between UC admissions offices and outreach programs. By linking the two, targeted students will have the academic preparation to excel, and the Admissions Office would have early contact with desired students. Finally, the research branch would examine why minorities are underrepresented on UC campuses, and how to best recruit and retain them. The ten campus Diversity Commissions should meet each quarter with the UC-wide commission to discuss diversity work and progress. The framework outlined here ensures a large labor pool for diversity initiatives, streamlined efforts, and ultimately, a solution to the UC diversity crisis.

NEXT STEPS

The University of California should explore each of the program proposals included in this policy initiative. A commission should be established at the entire UC level to explore developing a commission to address the four areas highlighted in this proposal, while individual schools could also begin campus-level efforts as proposed here to increase access to their campuses.

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A License to Drive, a Chance to Thrive

Jay Cole, University of Michigan

By providing information about college to every person who applies for or renews a driver's license, we can deliver college application information to many who would otherwise be excluded.

States would be required to provide individuals with an opportunity to register to receive information about college admissions and financial aid at the same time they apply for or renew a driver's license. An individual can fill out a College Information Registration Form that the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will send to the state's higher education agency. This form will vary by state but should include the individual's name, mailing address, e-mail address (if applicable), and academic/career interests.

The higher education agency will then be responsible for mailing an information packet about college admissions and financial aid (including a copy of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA) to that individual. If the individual has provided an e-mail address, the agency will add that address to list-serves that send out updates, application deadline reminders, and alerts about events such as college fairs and open houses.

This will put information into the hands of all students, not just those students who receive dozens of recruitment packets and letters because they have done well on the SAT or ACT.

KEY FACTS

- If implemented in every state, this idea could affect the entire population of people applying for or renewing a driver's license in America.
- Each year, this population includes millions of 15-17 year olds from all socioeconomic backgrounds who are applying for a driver's license, as well as millions of older adults who are renewing their licenses and do not have college degrees.

TALKING POINTS

- Every high school student wants a driver's license, and this idea links that desire with a strategy for delivering information about college into their hands.
- This idea also provides a way to show adults that it is never too late to pursue some form of postsecondary education and training.
- By connecting a driver's license with information about college, we can create a new channel of communication to a diverse audience about the possibility of going to college.

HISTORY

The "Motor Voter" law originally inspired this idea. In 1993, Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act, also known as the "Motor Voter" law. This law requires states to provide individuals with an opportunity to register to vote at the same time they apply for or renew a driver's license. The point behind the "Motor Voter" law was to make the process of registering

to vote as easy as possible, thereby extending the right to vote to as broad and diverse a population as possible.

“Motor Voter is making the electorate larger, more diverse, and more reflective of the American population. It is helping to eliminate historic disparities by registering citizens who have traditionally been left out—people with disabilities, minorities, young people, anyone who has recently moved, and people with lower incomes,” states the MotorVoter.com website.

This is exactly what needs to be done in terms of college opportunity and access. This proposal applies the principle behind the Motor Voter law to help in eliminating the historic disparities in awareness and information about college opportunity. Research has turned up no state where this idea is currently being implemented, but the precedent of the Motor Voter law suggests strongly that this idea is plausible. Just as registering a person to vote does not guarantee that s/he will actually cast a vote, putting information about college into a person’s hands does not guarantee that s/he will go to college. But this idea does address a major informational imbalance and places the right tools into the hands of the people who need it most—and who are also the least likely to get it from other sources.

ANALYSIS

The costs of this policy would be primarily in printing and postage expenses. Each branch of a state’s DMV would need to collect the College Information Registration Forms and send these forms to that state’s higher education agency. This agency, in turn, would mail printed materials to the individuals for whom they have received forms from the DMV.

AUDIENCE

State governments are the primary audience for this idea. Either an executive order from a governor or a bill from a legislature requiring the DMV and the state higher education agency to participate in this program would accomplish the goals of this idea.

NEXT STEPS

This is an idea that could be championed by a governor, a legislator, or a higher education leader, and implemented relatively quickly. Coalitions in support of this idea could be formed from the same groups that supported the “Motor Voter Act” in the early 1990s. Funding for printing and postage may be available from private foundations and companies that promote college attendance, such as the College Board.

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College-Based Outreach and Advising

Maddie Gelblum, Sam Brill, Yale University

Colleges around the country should create and administer outreach and advising programs designed to both educate high school students about the accessibility of four-year colleges and guide them through the application process.

The lack of socio-economic diversity in higher education deprives our nation's high school students of a chance to make the best of their potential and earn a livable wage. Low-income, high-achieving students exist, but they lack many advantages that would facilitate successful college application and enrollment. Many low-income high schools lack a "college-going culture"—that is, because of examples set by peers and family members, many students do not expect that college is within their reach even if they are qualified. In addition to this culture, or perhaps because of it, many students lack the basic yet critical information necessary to complete a college application.

KEY FACTS

- While two-thirds of students from the top income quartile enroll in a four-year college, only one-fifth of students from the bottom income quartile do so.
- Although 12,755 low-income students scored a 650 or above on the SAT Verbal in 2004, at low-income schools (in which more than 30 percent of students receive free lunch), only 37 percent of students even take a college entrance exam.
- Students in the outreach/advising College Summit program have a 79 percent college-going rate, compared to 49 percent of high school students nationwide.
- After the first year of the Yale Student Ambassador outreach program, applications from students at targeted schools rose 9.8 percent.

Outreach and advising programs tackle both of these issues. By making students aware that a four-year college is a real possibility in terms of acceptance, financial aid, and pre-

existing campus diversity and support, these programs create the keys to a college-going culture. The advising aspect of such programs aim at the specific details of producing a successful application, as they guide students through the processes of test taking, essay writing, college selection, and perhaps most important, FAFSA forms. Through

TALKING POINTS

- Educators and policy-makers across the nation recognize the critical income gap in higher education, and the social and economic effects produced by this gap.
- Despite our nation's imperfect K-12 education system, there are nevertheless many high-achieving, low-income students. Many such students are not applying to four-year colleges because they lack awareness and understanding of higher education and the college process.
- By reaching out to these students and helping them through the application process via systematic outreach and advising, colleges can increase their own socioeconomic diversity and work to remedy the problem on a national scale.

these programs, students gain both motivation and the tools necessary to attend a four-year college.

HISTORY

Colleges and nonprofits alike have been running outreach and advising programs since the early 1990s, nearly all with excellent results. Some are broad based and comprehensive, such as the nonprofit College Summit program, which works with entire school districts to run summer workshops, advise students throughout the application process, and train peer leaders and teachers to do the same. Since its founding in 1993, College Summit students have a 79 percent college-going rate, compared to 46 percent in the general populace. During the last school year, a more targeted and smaller version of College Summit, called Questbridge, helped nearly 300 students secure full scholarships or generous financial aid at prestigious colleges around the country. The University of Virginia's College Guide program, which places and subsidizes recent UVA graduates as assistant guidance counselors at Virginia high schools, increased college enrollment at some schools as much as 30 percent. Finally, Amherst College's Telementoring program pairs Amherst students with high-achieving, low-income high school students, mentoring them via telephone or email and providing guidance through the entire college process from beginning to end. Telementors are not recruiting these students for Amherst, but for college in general. Though no immediate, comprehensive statistics are available from Amherst, anecdotal indicators are remarkably positive.

In the fall of 2005, Yale established an outreach and advising program known as the Student Ambassadors program. Yale students serve as "ambassadors" to schools targeted for their low-income, high-achieving students. The ambassadors relate the benefits and support available for low-income students at Yale, in an effort to motivate students to apply. After its first year, applications from targeted Student Ambassador schools rose 9.8 percent. We propose that the Student Ambassadors program take on an additional advising role, establishing a relationship with the students at the schools they visit and helping them with their applications, regardless of whether those applications go to Yale.

ANALYSIS

Though there is a large supply of high-achieving, low-income students, many do not apply to four-year colleges. Although 12,755 low-income students from families making less than \$30,000/year scored a 650 or above on the SAT Verbal in 2004, at low-income schools (at which more than 30 percent of students receive free lunch), only 37 percent of students even took a college entrance exam that year. In addition, 43 percent of students who scored in the top 25 percent on the National Educational Longitudinal Study and are from the lowest socioeconomic quartile did not take the SAT or ACT. Indeed, researchers Steven Rose and Anthony Carnevale developed a model that demonstrates that if grades and test scores were the only admissions criteria at the most selective 146 colleges and universities, the percentage of students from the bottom socioeconomic half at these schools would increase from ten to 12 percent.

NEXT STEPS

Encourage governmental support of outreach and advising programs and advocacy by the universities themselves.

Promoting Access in State Merit-Based Scholarships

Jacob Anderson, Louisiana State University

To increase access to higher education for low-income students, money from state merit aid programs should base the amount of aid on Expected Family Contribution and not strictly on student merit, and provide tuition and books on the same budget

Over the past decade, some states have directed higher education funding toward merit-based scholarships. Since the creation of Georgia's Help Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Act in 1993, nine states have initiated tuition waiver programs based on merit. Although each state has an independent system, there are two types of merit scholarships. Michigan, Georgia, New Mexico, and South Carolina offer tuition waivers and stipends to all students who meet certain GPA and standardized test score requirements. Louisiana, Florida, and Kentucky provide universal tuition waivers to all students, and offer stipends to gifted candidates. These programs have attracted talented students to state institutions, provided students with greater college choice, and motivated high school students to excel in their core curriculum.

KEY FACTS

- Since the initiation of Georgia's Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) in 1993, nine states have adopted strictly merit-based scholarship programs.
- In the 2004-2005 academic year, states spent an aggregate of \$442 million on tuition waiver non-grant programs and \$1.1 billion on merit-only aid.
- In one state merit scholarship program, 60.4 percent of recipients reported a family income of greater than \$75,000 per year, while only 8.2 percent reported an income of less than \$25,000 per year.
- An EFC of \$1,000 corresponds to an average family income of \$20,000.

However, access continues to be a critical factor in shaping education policy. The average cost of a four-year institution consumes over 60 percent of family income when that family is from the lowest quintile. Consequently, the enrollment rates of this demographic group are especially sensitive to fluctuations in financial aid policy. Instead of assisting low-income families, state merit scholarships use resources to compete for talented students.

TALKING POINTS

- In the past 20 years, state merit aid programs have grown over 500 percent.
- In an effort to retain talented students, many states distribute aid based solely on merit.
- By adding requirements based on EFC, state scholarships can attract gifted applicants while providing access to all income groups.

State scholarship programs could improve both low-income enrollment and completion rates by placing caps on Estimated Family Contribution (EFC), and by adding need-based stipends to the scholarship package. Students with an EFC exceeding \$10,000 could

independently finance higher education at a state institution without a sharp decrease in their standard of living. However, the EFC is not a precise representation of plausible contribution, especially with middle-income families. This proposal therefore suggests an EFC cap corresponding to high-income families. With an EFC cap at \$10,000, states would significantly reduce their education budget without excluding middle- and upper-income students. This available money could fund need-based stipends. Students with an EFC of less than \$1000 would be eligible for \$400 per semester for books and living expenses. These modifications would improve the diversity of students by reducing unmet need.

HISTORY

Although a formally combined need and non-need based program would be original, in practice it already exists. The most significant attempt at a need and merit conglomeration was the original Georgia HOPE scholarship. Initially, scholarship had an income cap of \$66,000 per year. In an effort to attract gifted students of all backgrounds, this criterion increased to \$100,000 per year in 1994 and was abolished altogether in 1995. Even though few states have combined programs, the distribution of aid based on need and merit is vague. In a study by Michael McPherson, low-income students with high SAT scores received over twice as much need-based aid as their low-scoring counterparts. Distributing aid based on both need and merit is already the de facto system.

ANALYSIS

This proposal could be implemented while maintaining the current budget. High-income students receiving state assistance represent a large group. According to statistics from the Office of Budget and Planning at Louisiana State University in 2003, 60.46 percent of TOPS recipients reported a total family income of greater than \$75,000 per year. Similarly, in Florida's Bright Futures scholarship, 1999 data states that 15 percent of recipients had a family income of greater than \$100,000 per year. States could save millions of dollars by excluding high-income students from financial aid programs. In addition, low-income, high-achieving students are a smaller minority. At LSU in 2003, only 8.2 percent of student families reported an income of less than \$25,000 per year. Considering that tuition waivers are more costly than stipends, states could put this proposal into practice without budget increases.

NEXT STEPS

Installing joint need- and merit-based programs should be gradual. A significant first step would be adding EFC caps to programs with the most high-income recipients (i.e. Louisiana, Florida, and Kentucky). This measure could also be applied to other states facing budget cuts. When states expand scholarship programs, the need-based dimension could be implemented. But the preliminary challenge of any of these steps is unifying states on the necessity of access.

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Engaging Families in Higher Ed Access: A Cradle-to-College Approach

Tito Escobar, Rice University

By introducing information about planning for college very early on in a child's life, and maintaining it throughout his or her development via a network of pre-existing social programs, families can gain the financial skills necessary to successfully plan for such a significant cost.

The price of higher education is expensive for U.S. citizens who live below poverty levels and for middle class citizens as well. The cost of a college education has increased exponentially in the past 20 years, so that now the average college graduate has an \$18,000 debt burden upon graduation. In the past, education has been viewed as a private good rather than a public good by an overwhelming number of policymakers. Even with liberal funding, such as Pell Grants and other scholarships for students living in poverty, recent studies have shown significant direct correlations between a student's family's income and that student's likelihood of graduating from college.

KEY FACTS

- Among college-age students today, 61 percent are Caucasian, 44 percent are Latino, and 28 percent are African American.
- Over two-thirds of Latino parents were not adequately informed of financial aid opportunities for higher education while their children were in the K-12 school system.
- Children whose parents were involved in their academic careers were twice as likely to enroll in college.

HISTORY

Implementation of a Cradle-to-College (C2C) approach requires synchronizing efforts between federal TRIO programs, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Childcare (WIC), and Head Start programs (HS). This approach would target and encourage families to increase their college financial aid literacy at every stage of their child's scholastic career. Before any initiatives are taken, though, the agencies should adopt uniform enrollment standards so that families can participate in all three programs with relative ease. The primary objective is to identify at-risk families, especially parents, through WIC. The WIC program has contact with 45 percent of all families with infants in America; the majority of those are low-income, and two-thirds are African American or Latino.

TALKING POINTS

- Access to higher education in the United States is disproportionately unavailable to racial minorities, especially African Americans and Latinos.
- These disparities are rooted in information asymmetries regarding financial aid and college applications.
- A Cradle-to-College (C2C) program would target parents and children early in their academic careers and increase opportunities to pursue higher education by improving financial literacy on aid options and scholarship availability.

ANALYSIS

Once identified, a portion of WIC's informational sessions could be allotted to TRIO personnel so that they can introduce parents to the world of college access and finance. Second, TRIO should target children through Head Start programs. At this stage, children's curiosity for the subject could be stimulated, creating the most fundamental basis for a college-bound culture. Third, this proposal suggests that WIC and Head Start work closely with TRIO to provide higher education counseling until children complete primary school. Currently, WIC educates the parents of six million children up to the age of five, and Head Start provides services for 906,000 children under the age of five. By increasing the age limit, the Cradle-to-College program's impact will continue during crucial development years. The TRIO programs would continue their support at the secondary school level; at this phase and beyond, TRIO should counsel parents and children together as much as possible, in order to harmonize the family's outlook on the future and its possibilities.

Through simultaneous motivation of parents and children, knowledge and generational gaps can be reduced, and fewer students will be lost in the cracks of the educational system due to ignorance. Higher education is not an individual effort; it is an endeavor that requires collective action and family planning. Rather than erecting a new agency to achieve this goal, coordinating the efforts of these three existing programs around a new objective will help streamline costs, reach a larger number of families, and thus better achieve the objectives of this policy.

NEXT STEPS

Officials that attempt to implement this change will doubtless encounter hurdles along the way, some of which are addressed here. The greatest obstacle will be achieving interagency cooperation between WIC's 90 state-based agencies, TRIO's 2,700 programs, and Head Start's 1,604 programs. It is always difficult for bureaucracies to agree on objectives and expenditures, but a centralization of relevant data would provide an important first step. In addition, when agencies are assigned to support activities outside their purview, they run the risk of becoming disorganized and therefore less effective. Policy makers will need to develop comprehensive mission statements for each of these organizations and develop methods to ensure that they are enforced. Finally, it will prove difficult for families to maintain participation in all three programs, especially during the preliminary stages of Cradle-to-College. Molding these programs to local communities may be the deciding factor for this program's ultimate success.

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In-State College Tuition for Undocumented Students

Raj Borsellino, Amherst College

By qualifying all high school graduates in Iowa as in-state residents, despite their legal status, we can allow many more students to attend college and become productive members of society.

Children in the United States are taught early about the importance of the American Dream: that hard work and a positive attitude can give one the power to attend college, earn money, and live the lifestyle one desires. Many children, however, face major obstacles. Students who were brought into the United States illegally as children and attend high school in Iowa are not considered residents of the state, and therefore are ineligible for in-state college tuition rates. Their parents are often working at low-skilled, low-wage jobs, and cannot afford college tuition. Consequently, these children are often consigned to bleak future prospects.

KEY FACTS

- At Iowa's two major public universities, undocumented Iowa students must pay three times as much in tuition fees that other students from Iowa pay.
- Only 14 percent of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. have any post-secondary education.
- By the year 2012, Iowa will face a shortage of approximately 150,000 workers, many of them in the critical fields of education and health care.

A new version of the Iowa Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act needs to be created, granting in-state college tuition to students who immigrated to the United States without proper documentation. This bill will also provide these students with the opportunity to receive statewide grants or loans, such as State of Iowa Scholarships and Iowa Tuition Grants. If enacted, students who are paying tuition fees at state universities cannot, under any circumstances, be discriminated against because of their legal status.

Under the terms of the bill, students who wish to qualify must have graduated from an accredited Iowa high school, have lived in the state for three years, have a clean criminal record in the United States, and sign a promissory note that they will take steps toward becoming legal residents as soon as possible.

TALKING POINTS

- Students who qualify under the DREAM Act did not choose to come to America illegally; they were brought as minors.
- These students have all abided by the law and worked hard to graduate.
- Current policy in Iowa unfairly discriminates against undocumented students because of reasons over which they have no control.

HISTORY

Various versions of the DREAM Act have been enacted in several states, including California, Texas,

and New York. The Iowa DREAM Act, which passed unanimously in the Iowa House Representatives in March 2004, has been stalled in the Senate and is still awaiting a vote. A national version of the bill, which has been proposed with bipartisan support in both the U.S. House and Senate, is currently being examined.

ANALYSIS

This legislation rewards hard work and perseverance. It also will help end the so-called “brain drain” in Iowa, a problem that has recently been exacerbated due to an aging population. Currently, Iowa is importing temporary workers from India to do high-tech jobs, a short-term solution to a long-term problem. If the state cannot find skilled laborers to fill these positions, it will face serious economic consequences. Allowing undocumented students to attend college by paying in-state rates, this policy will create a force of skilled workers who will stay in the state after their college graduation. They will become productive members of society, yielding a strong middle class base that will help to revive dying small towns and provide the doctors, teachers, nurses, and engineers now in short supply.

AUDIENCE

This proposal will benefit the students who qualify under its terms, as many of them simply cannot afford to attend college unless they are granted in-state tuition rates. Furthermore, it will have profound positive effects on Iowa’s economic standing, as these students will be able to live in the state as legal residents after graduation and hold jobs in such fields as education and health care which are currently unfilled.

NEXT STEPS

A lack of education about the DREAM Act has been the largest obstacle in its path. There is often a misperception among legislators and constituents that such a policy would encourage illegal immigration by, in effect, rewarding those immigrants who broke the law by being here. With rising tuition costs and overstretched state budgets, there is also the question of how to pay for the extra tuition subsidies these students would be getting. In actuality, the DREAM Act does not reward immigration, but instead rewards students who work hard despite being the casualties of decisions over which they had no control. Although it may cost the state thousands of dollars in the short-term, its long-term effects will help the Iowa receive millions of dollars in revenue.

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Universal, Free Higher Education

Stephen Durham, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Using the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill) as a model, create a progressive higher education policy that will provide universal and free higher education to all qualified college applicants.

The cost of higher education is expensive for U.S. citizens who live below poverty levels and for middle class citizens as well. The cost of a college education has increased exponentially in the past 20 years so that the average college graduate today has an \$18,000 debt burden upon graduation. In the past, education has been viewed as a private good rather than a public good by an overwhelming number of policymakers. Even with liberal funding, such as Pell Grants and other scholarships for students living in poverty, recent studies have shown that a higher percentage of degrees are obtained by students from families with higher incomes.

KEY FACTS

- The average total student debt for a four-year degree has increased to \$18,000.
- Tuition costs have increased 40 percent for public colleges and 33 percent for private colleges in the last decade.
- Wages for the average American have increased 17 percent in the last decade.
- The Congressional Advisory Committee on Higher Education reported that, in the next decade, over forty million prospective college students will be denied a college education due to increased tuition and fee costs and enrollment caps.
- Total tuition costs for all enrolled college students now stand at \$30 billion.

HISTORY

The 1944 GI Bill was revolutionary in its attempt to educate military service members returning from World War II. Until that time, offering educational assistance to veterans had not been attempted. The height of veteran participation in the GI Bill was in 1976, when almost three million service members returning from the Vietnam War received financial aid through it. The GI Bill provided enrollees a \$500 per month stipend (1944 dollars) to attend college. Funding at this level was enough for veterans to pay tuition even at exclusive colleges and universities. Subsequent versions of the GI Bill (i.e. the Veteran's Educational Assistance Program and the Montgomery GI Bill) have not been as successful as the

TALKING POINTS

- The economic benefits from a universal, free higher education policy are astounding. By 1952 the GI Bill cost U.S. taxpayers seven billion dollars, but conservative estimates show a return of \$48.4 billion in economic growth and increased income tax revenue.
- The 1944 GI Bill was implemented in much the same way that a voucher system works. Students were provided funds to spend on the college of their choice.
- The 1944 GI Bill created an explosion of enrollments on college campuses and created a subsequent growth in teachings positions and enrollment capacity at colleges and universities.

GI Bill of 1944. In 1997, roughly 300,000 veterans were attending higher education institutions with aid provided by the United States government. On a national scale the current level of aid has not kept pace with the college cost increases, nor helped increase socio-economic diversity in higher education. The current structure of college funding for low-income students is a patchwork quilt of programs that are hard to understand and administered by a host of government agencies.

ANALYSIS

The success of the 1944 GI Bill cannot be disputed. The economic success of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s was due in large part to the U.S. government's extended support of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who gallantly sacrificed life and limb for their country. Conservative estimates show that for every taxpayer dollar that was provided to participants in the GI Bill, at least six dollars were returned to the economy either in growth or income tax revenue. The explosion in the last ten years of college tuition and fees has been at rates far above the growth in personal income. Granted, the application of the GI Bill had an element of discrimination that was a sign of the times, but it cannot be argued that it was not a step in the right direction for minorities, as well as those in the majority. The current structure of financial aid, although adopted by taking great pains to ensure diversity, has only reinforced the fact that only the most affluent students have access to a quality higher education. Simply put, college tuition carries too many costs for an increasing number of our citizens.

AUDIENCE

Veteran, education, and retiree advocacy groups stand to gain the most from a universal, free higher education policy. Many veterans groups are already calling for a return to the original language and funding of the 1944 GI Bill. Education advocacy groups are on record stating their opposition to the current structure of student aid for college, and with a free higher education policy in place, it is expected that there would be an increase in teaching positions. Retiree advocacy groups will see the benefit in a strong economic return from a universal free higher education policy that will ensure the security of programs and policies for senior citizens.

NEXT STEPS

The American Legion was instrumental in pressuring the government to adopt the 1944 GI Bill. Any one of the relevant advocacy groups listed above should take the lead and push for a universal free higher education policy modeled upon the 1944 GI Bill. Once this takes place, other advocacy groups should be enlisted and a national drive to adopt a universal, free higher education policy should be pursued by a national coalition of advocacy groups. Groups such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Association of Retired People, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the College Board, and the National Education Association can create a concerted effort in Washington to see this policy adopted.

SOURCES

* A full list of sources is available upon request

Making the AmeriCorps Segal Education Award Tax-Free

Eva DuGoff, George Washington University

Unlike most other forms of scholarships or fellowships, the Segal Education Award of \$4,725 is subject to federal tax in the year the Trust pays the voucher. In order to properly honor and support AmeriCorps alumni, Congress should amend the AmeriCorps statute to make the AmeriCorps Segal Education Award a tax-free scholarship.

At present, Americans who complete an AmeriCorps year of service are offered a reward: either a \$1,200 check or a \$4,725 Segal Education Award. The Segal Education Award can be used to pay educational expenses at qualified institutions of higher education, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans.

The Segal Education Award is distributed to the student in a way similar to a scholarship or grant, i.e., the award is paid directly to the institution of higher education or lender. The AmeriCorps alumnus does

not receive payments directly from the National Service Trust. The National Service Trust updates the alumnus regarding the status of the Segal Education Award payment, but does not inform the alumnus that the award is considered taxable income.

By reforming the Segal Education Award into a tax-free scholarship, AmeriCorps alumni who have successfully completed their term of service would not be surprised and upset by the additional \$4,725 in taxable income.

TALKING POINTS

- Americans who participate in AmeriCorps are serving their country by living at the poverty line. Penalizing AmeriCorps members who are seeking to pay for higher education or to pay off student debt, at a time when many AmeriCorps members are not earning very much, is unfair and counteracts the ethos of AmeriCorps service.
- Studies show that many AmeriCorps members who receive the Segal Education Award feel cheated by the federal government when they learn that their award is subject to taxes.

KEY FACTS

- The AmeriCorps Segal Education Award is a \$4,725 voucher payable to an institution of higher education or to repay student loans.
- More than 75,000 Americans volunteer through AmeriCorps every year.
- Between 2003 and 2005, more than 80 percent of AmeriCorps members chose to receive a Segal Education Award.
- Since 1994, AmeriCorps members have earned more than one billion dollars in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards.
- Tax-free education awards would relieve the tax burden on AmeriCorps alumni who are pursuing higher education or paying off student loans.

HISTORY

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson initially created the AmeriCorps program, launched in 1965, with the purpose of engaging America's young people in public service.

Considered volunteers during their term of service, AmeriCorps members receive a taxed living stipend equivalent to 105 percent of the federal poverty level in his or her community. AmeriCorps members are engaged in a wide variety of community service projects, including direct service and capacity building.

The concept of reforming the Segal Education Award is not a new idea. It is a view commonly held among AmeriCorps alumni, though not current AmeriCorps members, many of whom are unaware that the award will be taxed. There is no current legislation in place to reform the AmeriCorps Education Award program into a tax-free scholarship.

ANALYSIS

While reforming this program would reduce the taxable income available to the federal government, the overall impact would be limited. Alumni using the Segal Education Award are probably in school or recently graduated from AmeriCorps and have small incomes. While the loss to the federal government would be minimal, considering their limited incomes, the individual impact on the approximately 60,000 AmeriCorps alumni choosing the award every year cannot be disregarded.

Continuing to penalize AmeriCorps alumni who use the Segal Education Award may have the effect of undermining the AmeriCorps program and its impact on the community.

AUDIENCE

The parties most interested in this reform will be AmeriCorps alumni and organizations and the people who rely on their service. Members of Congress should support reforming the Segal Education Award in order to encourage America's young people to engage in community service.

NEXT STEPS

In order to reform the Segal Education Award, Congress will need to pass legislation to change how the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) treats the award. Alternatively, the IRS may be able to administratively change how the award is considered.

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Making the Hope Scholarship Work for Low-Income Students

Amy Frame, American University

Expand the Hope Scholarship to assist low-income students in meeting college expenses.

Currently, the Hope Scholarship allows students who are in their first two years of post-secondary education to take a \$1,650 tax credit for the educational expenses they pay out of pocket (tuition and fees, not books and living expenses). There are income ceilings that limit the use of the credit (roughly \$55,000 for a single person or \$110,000 for a couple). Parents can use the Hope Scholarship for their children's education and can take a credit for each student in college.

KEY FACTS

- The Hope Scholarship currently allows students or their families a tax credit of \$1,650 for educational expenses for two years of higher education.
- Because the credit is non-refundable and only covers tuition and fees, it is an inadequate tool for low-income families trying to meet college costs.
- Reconfiguring the Hope Scholarship could make it more useful to the most financially challenged students trying to obtain higher education.

Unfortunately, the Hope Scholarship has not sufficiently achieved the goal of assisting low-income students. Because of the way the scholarship is structured, it is of limited use to those with few resources to pay for higher education, and this potentially useful tool has done very little to help the students it was designed for. In fact, tax credits (Hope plus the Lifetime Learning credits) account for an average of only \$442 per full time student, with the lion's share of this benefit going to families with incomes over \$40,000 per year.

This does not mean that the scholarship should be thrown out of the toolbox; rather, by making some adjustments to the Hope Scholarship, it can be made into a real benefit for America's lowest income students and assist them in obtaining the higher education they need to compete in the global economy.

TALKING POINTS

- Using an existing credit would save costs associated with creating a new program.
- Using a tax credit saves administrative costs associated with benefit disbursement programs.
- Expanding the credit will benefit students who have the most need for college funding assistance.
- Assisting the lowest-income students can expand higher education access and create a stronger economy with a more skilled workforce.

HISTORY

As a key feature of Bill Clinton's Tax Payer Relief Act of 1997, the Hope Scholarship tax credit enjoyed broad bipartisan support as a way to make college more affordable for America's low-income students and their families. Since that time critics have noted that the credit is regressive, favoring higher income tax payers, and

that it has little benefit because it does not cover many college costs and deducts other financial aid from its allowed expenses.

ANALYSIS

The first changes needed in the Hope Scholarship are in the structure of the credit itself. To be truly effective, the scholarship must cover four or five years of college attendance, not just two. While an Associates degree is economically beneficial, the wages for a person with a Bachelors degree are almost two million dollars higher by retirement age. More jobs now require a four-year degree, and limiting the credit to two years significantly reduces employment possibilities.

The next necessary structural change is to make the scholarship refundable. The Hope Scholarship is a tax credit. This means it is only good up to the tax liability of the individual who takes it. This makes the scholarship a perfectly regressive program; those with the highest incomes get the maximum benefit. However, many of the lowest income individuals do not have \$1,500 a year in tax liability. Simply making the scholarship refundable would put cash into the pockets of needy students to spend on their education. This would be especially helpful for working adult students, who not only need money for secondary education, but also need time to complete it. Currently, if students reduce their work hours to attend school, they lose the credit because they pay fewer payroll taxes. Workers in the lowest wage jobs often do not have any tax liability, making the scholarship completely inaccessible to them.

Another key change would extend the kinds of expenses students can use it for. As it stands, the scholarship only covers tuition and fees; extending it to cover books and living expenses will make it much more useful. For working students, the highest college expense is often the opportunity cost of reduced work hours; allowing them to use the scholarship for other expenses will ease their financial burden while in school. This limitation on the scholarship is exacerbated by the fact that it can only be taken after other forms of financial aid have been deducted from the student's cost of attendance. Eliminating that limitation will also aid students in covering all of the expenses involved in attending college. These changes will make the Hope Scholarship part of a comprehensive financial aid package for students and allow the lowest income students to derive real benefit from the program.

While expanding the Hope Scholarship will undoubtedly increase the costs of the program, there are some ways to offset this cost. To begin with, expanding Hope will lead to an elimination of the use of the Lifetime Learning Credit for most undergraduates. The Lifetime credit could be shifted for use by graduate students and continuing education programs. Additionally, expanding the Hope will reduce the amount of federal loans students will need to take out to cover college expenses, and will reduce the administration of those loans. Finally, in the long term more college access means higher wages, and therefore more tax liability for students. Though this offset would not be immediate, it would certainly generate revenue after a few years.

NEXT STEPS

A study of costs and expected participation would be the next step to expanding the credit. Because this is a tax policy issue, students need to lobby the House of Representatives for changes to the program.

A Promise to Pay Tuition for Graduating Seniors

This article has been retracted and is no longer available. Any statements or claims once made in the article should be considered void and nonrepresentative of the author or of the Roosevelt Institution.

Tax-Free Textbooks

Nekpen Osuan, Baylor University

Textbooks should have a tax-free week each semester, to encourage students to buy their books at the beginning of the academic term.

Tuition deregulation, among other things, has led to a 51 percent increase in public university tuition since 1994. Meanwhile, the median household income in Texas has only increased by 27 percent. The average family arguably spends a greater portion of its income on higher education than all other levels of education combined.

As a result, the average Texas undergraduate finishes college with \$17,176 in debt, 28th in national rankings. To help alleviate the escalating financial burden of education for all families, the Texas state legislature enacted a tax-free weekend in 1999 that exempts many school essentials from the state sales tax. Although this initiative benefits both consumers and businesses, it has not been extended to textbooks, an item that primarily benefits higher education students.

KEY FACTS

- Tuition deregulation, among other things, has led to a 51 percent increase in public university tuition since 1994.
- Meanwhile, the median household income in Texas has only increased by 27 percent.
- The average Texas undergraduate finishes college with \$17,176 of debt, 28th in national rankings.

ANALYSIS

Every effort to assist students seeking a higher education is beneficial in the

TALKING POINTS

- Tuition deregulation has led to a dramatic increase in higher education costs.
- Textbooks represent a sizable portion of a student's yearly budget but are not included in state tax holidays designed to discount school supplies.
- Including textbooks in tax holidays would decrease the financial burden of higher education for lower- and middle-income families.

form of social surplus; even the smallest form of aid is a public investment in human capital, which translates into a stronger and more productive workforce. According to the Texas Comptroller, every dollar appropriated to higher education returns \$5.50 to the Texas economy. Overall, this investment increases

the state's economic capacity by roughly \$23.1 billion per year. The U.S. Government Accountability Office found in 2005 that textbook prices have doubled at twice the rate of inflation over the past two decades. To make matters worse, the state government and private banks and lenders currently use the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to adjust financial aid and loan interest

rates, though economic research has shown that the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI), which more accurately measures change in prices specific to the university-associated spending, is nearly four times the CPI.

AUDIENCE

According to the College Board, the average student at a four-year public institution spends \$843 on textbooks per year. In Texas, this would amount to about \$69.55 saved per consumer every year, creating a financial incentive for buying required textbooks on-time. Alleviating this financial burden will assist higher education students in meeting the increasingly steep costs of pursuing a post-secondary degree. When students are not able to afford cyclical costs like textbooks every semester, they are tempted to jeopardize the success of their education by putting off buying required texts until they face examination in a course. The Texas Legislature Senate Education Committee can play a vital role in preventing such a dilemma by adopting this policy intervention in order to confront the issue.

NEXT STEPS

One way to make higher education more accessible would be to provide one week in each academic semester where textbooks are exempt from the 8.25 percent state sales tax, a natural progression of the current tax-free weekend. The textbook tax-free week would be seven days after the MLK holiday and seven days prior to Labor Day, a period of time gauged to benefit the greatest number of students in the state. Providing a one-week span for the tax exemption makes sense given that students usually have a one-week window to adjust semester schedules and return or exchange books purchased at the campus bookstore. A way to alleviate the shrink in the state budget that would be caused by this tax break would be to remove items on the current tax-free weekend list that do not directly benefit education, like hunting and fishing gear.

SOURCES

* A full list of sources is available upon request.

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