unstack the odds:

ZAP!

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

So ALL Students Can Access College AND Graduate!

AUTHOR: DR. JOE ROTTENBORN

Dr. Rottenborn worked for 30 years as a public educator in Ohio. He taught social studies at Boardman High for thirteen years, was an Assistant Principal at Salem High School, Assistant Superintendent of Canfield Local and Chagrin Falls Schools, and became Superintendent at Columbiana Exempted Village in 1994.

After retiring as Columbiana’s Superintendent at the end of December 2001, Joe became Executive Director of the Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP), which provides free advising on college admissions and financial aid to students from Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana Counties in northeast Ohio. In its first ten years after startup, the MVCAP advised over 10,000 high school students and parents, raised more than $1,150,000, and awarded over 175 last-dollar scholarships—most for $1,000. Dr. Rottenborn completed 10 years of MVCAP service with his retirement at the end of 2011.

Joe Rottenborn served on the boards of the Kent State University College Tech Prep Consortium, Salem City Schools, and the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN). He has been married for 40 years to another SHS Class of ’66 graduate, Cindy, former senior library assistant at Kent State University Salem campus; Dr. Rottenborn was also an adjunct instructor at KSU Salem. The couple has two children—Mary (38) and Bo (31), both graduates of the University of Notre Dame. Joe and Cindy also have one grandchild—Luke Michael Kozlowski, born on 11/17/10.

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Dr. Rottenborn’s publications include the following:


Joe Rottenborn invites you to access his various websites:

- Follow the most important stories on college admissions and financial aid on Twitter—particularly, via Flipboard—at [http://twitter.com/rottenbornj](http://twitter.com/rottenbornj)
- Read *The Joe Rottenborn Daily* for today’s top stories on college admissions/financial aid in newsletter form - [http://paper.li/rottenbornj](http://paper.li/rottenbornj)
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Introduction—the Situation: A Preview of Gaps, Access, and Success—through quotations

“Because too many minority children grow up in families that bear the brunt of low-paying jobs and high levels of unemployment, the odds are stacked heavily against their graduating from high school, being admitted to a university, finding the money to pay for college, and then, finally, graduating with a bachelor’s degree.”—Peter Sacks, Tearing Down the Gates: Confronting the Class Divide in American Education, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007, pp. 116-117.


During the past two years, I have done a regular online sweep regarding college access and success, surveying internet articles for our Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP) project, “online advising.” I now quote from these timely sources often and extensively throughout this introduction--and this book, for that matter; I identify main points in red. My purpose is to enable those working in schools, college access programs, and community
organizations to hear the voices of others—affiliated with universities, the federal government, state governments, non-profits, and the media. My hope is this synthesis of information will help us zap (i.e., attack) the achievement gap and other gaps (e.g., opportunity, preparation, parenting, fathering, poverty, racial, socioeconomic, enrollment, gender, vocabulary, reading, math, graduation, skills, school readiness, college readiness, encouragement) to provide college access and success for all students in America. (And, yes, all means all.)

Those I quote are often important actors, from various places on the educational and political spectrums; some are well-known, while others are not. Some I agree with and others I don’t. Some are viewed as “authorities,” others aren’t. But many speak more eloquently than I; indeed, their insights and scholarship impressed and, often, humbled me. Therefore, from my literature review, I now seek to share with readers these comments, research-findings, and publications, many available online. Citations are given intext and direct links to documents are provided, whenever possible, printed in green; these URLs in the e-book format can be viewed on tablets, desktop computers, or, even, smart phones—if you go online via your mobile phone, which 25% of owners do, according to a recent survey. (Chris Gayomali, “Web Browsing via Mobile Phone,” Time—Techland, July 12, 2011.) http://techland.time.com/2011/07/12/study-says-25-percent-prefer-web-browsing-via-mobile-phone/ In advance, I apologize for those links no longer “up” on the internet.

I’ll dedicate this book to the more than 10,000 advisees our Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP) has served over its ten-year existence: You can go to college—and graduate! College changed my life: I hope it will change yours, as well. I’ll also thank our financial-aid advisors—particularly, Edwina Whitehead, Chuck Willett, and Ruth Jones—who are the MVCAP to students, their families, and our cooperating schools. And to my dear wife, Cindy, who epitomizes our passion for helping kids in need, thank you, my love.

0.1 America’s educational system—I’ll start this introduction by noting that, according to a March 2011 telephone survey of over 2,000 adults in a representative U.S. sample, 94% of parents say “. . . they expect their child to attend college.” (Paul Taylor, ed., Is College Worth It? College Presidents, Public Assess Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education, Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center—Social & Demographic Trends, May 16, 2011, p. 1.) http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2011/05/higher-ed-report.pdf Obviously, a college education is viewed as desirable by Americans; indeed, according to the report on that survey, “College remains a near universal aspiration in this country, even in the face of steeply rising costs.” (Paul Taylor, ed., Is College Worth It? College Presidents, Public Assess Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education, Washington, D.C.:
But is our American educational system enabling all students to access college and graduate? Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), raised doubts in her 2011 online posting, as she stated:

. . . American education, which used to be the envy of the world, is in dire straits. Many public school students, kindergarten through 12th grade, are struggling; children of color and poor children struggle most. More than 60 percent of all fourth, eighth, and 12th grade public school students and nearly 80 percent or more of Black and Hispanic public school students in the same grades are reading or doing math below grade level. The U.S. ranks 24th among 30 developed countries on overall educational achievement for 15-year-olds, and in a study of education systems in 60 countries, we ranked 31st in math achievement and 23rd in science achievement for 15-year-olds. Too often children fall behind in school and drop out, increasing their risk of entering the cradle to prison pipeline. (Marian Wright Edelman, “Getting Children Ready For School,” HUFF POST—IMPACT, August 12, 2011.)

The attitude of American parents toward U.S. schools seems to reflect Edelman’s misgivings. Indeed, according to a 2011 post by Greg Toppo on the annual PDK survey, “But since 2001, Americans have soured on schools in general: When 1,002 adults were asked June 4-13 to give a letter grade to ‘public schools in the nation as a whole,’ only 17% gave them an A or B, down from 23% in 2001, and 27% in 1985.” (Greg Toppo, “Poll: Parent give thumbs up to local schools,” USA TODAY, August 17, 2011.)

Ironically, when it came to their children’s own school, parental attitudes were far more positive. Writer Toppo stated:

Nearly eight in 10 Americans — 79% — give an ‘A or B’ grade to the school their oldest child attends, according to findings released today by Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) International, an educators association. That’s up from 68% in 2001, and the highest percentage of favorable ratings since PDK began asking the question in 1985. That year, 71% of parents gave their kids’ school top grades. (Greg Toppo, “Poll: Parent give thumbs up to local schools,” USA TODAY, August 17, 2011.)

However, doubts also seemed to exist regarding the efficacy of postsecondary education institutions, according to an online survey of more than 1,000 college and university CEOs, which indicated that “only 19% of
college presidents say the U.S. system of higher education is the best in the world now, and just 7% say they believe it will be the best in the world ten years from now.” (Paul Taylor, ed., Is College Worth It? College Presidents, Public Assess Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education, Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center—Social & Demographic Trends, May 16, 2011, p. 2.)

Now, I’ll quote, at length, from a 2006 report by The Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher in the United States; that study, requested by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, stated:

We acknowledge that not everyone needs to go to college. But everyone needs a postsecondary education. Indeed, we have seen ample evidence that some form of postsecondary instruction is increasingly vital to an individual’s economic security. Yet too many Americans just aren’t getting the education that they need—and that they deserve.

We are losing some students in our high schools, which do not yet see preparing all pupils for postsecondary education and training as their responsibility.

Others don’t enter college because of inadequate information and rising costs, combined with a confusing financial aid system that spends too little on those who need help the most.

Among high school graduates who do make it on to postsecondary education, a troubling number waste time—and taxpayer dollars—mastering English and math skills that they should have learned in high school. And some never complete their degrees at all, at least in part because most colleges and universities don’t accept responsibility for making sure that those they admit actually succeed. . . .

The consequences of these problems are most severe for students from low-income families and for racial and ethnic minorities. But they affect us all. (A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. x.)
http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/final-report.pdf

A 2011 study from the Education Sector also commented on college graduation rates, as it began with the following statement:

The American higher education system is plagued by two chronic problems: dropouts and debt. Barely half of the students who start college get a degree within six years, and graduation rates at less-selective colleges often hover at 25 percent or less. At the same time, student loan debt is at an all-time high, recently passing credit card debt in total volume. Loan default rates have risen sharply in recent years, consigning a growing number of students to years of financial misery. In
combination, drop-outs and debt are a major threat to the nation’s ability to help students become productive, well-educated citizens. (Kevin Carey and Erin Dillon, Debt to Degree: A New Way of Measuring College Success, Education Sector, August 2011, p. 1)
http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/Debt%20to%20Degree%20CYCT_RELEASE.pdf

As for student loan debt, an August 2011 posting in The Wall Street Journal, based on a report from New York’s Federal Reserve Bank, stated the following: “But student loans are up sharply. There was $550 billion in student debt outstanding in the second quarter, up 25% from $440 billion in the third quarter of 2008.” (Justin Lahart, “Student Loan Debt Climbs,” The Wall Street Journal—Real Time Economics, August 15, 2011.)

Furthermore, student loan delinquencies also rose, according to a summer 2011 posting, which noted: “In the second quarter of 2011, the rate of student loans that were more than 90 days past due rose from 10.6 percent to 11.2 percent, according to the New York Fed.” (“Student-Loan Delinquencies Rise, Adding To Fears Of An Education Bubble,” HUFF POST—COLLEGE, August 17, 2011.)

Another 2011 report, by the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), sounded an alarm regarding students’ postsecondary success, as that document declared:

America’s college graduation rates are a national crisis. Our nation’s low college attainment diminishes the life choices and chances of thousands of students, particularly those with low incomes who live in underserved communities. Citizens without the opportunities afforded by a college degree undermine the United States’ promise and potential.

But creating consensus on the importance of college completion is difficult. We seek the help of others who share our belief that all students deserve a fair chance to get to and through college and who will work alongside us to help them earn the freedom to live their dreams.

Our nation’s children deserve nothing less. (The Promise Of College Completion: KIPP’s Early Successes and Challenges, Knowledge Is Power Program, April 28, 2011, p. 23.)

In fact, this graduation-rate crisis isn’t apparent at all U.S. institutions of higher learning—indeed, it’s unseen at some but concentrated at others, as this assessment in The Hechinger Report posting of Jon Marcus observed:

The graduation problem isn’t generally evident at elite colleges and universities, both private and public, whose graduation rates are comparatively high. It’s concentrated at community colleges and lower-tier public universities, which enroll most of America’s students. Such institutions increasingly serve the fastest-growing segment of American
college enrollment: low-income, nonwhite, non-native-English-speaking students who are the first in their families to go to college.

Community colleges enroll much higher percentages of students who work full or part time and are considered at risk for dropping out—and who are also more likely to have children at home and have interrupted their education, in some cases for years.

In addition, the vast majority arrive unprepared for college-level work, with 60 percent or more steered into remedial education, according to Thomas Bailey, director of the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University.

‘They don’t have money, they’re working, they’re the people who are least likely to afford the tuition increases,’ says Stan Jones, president of Complete College America, a national nonprofit working to increase the number of Americans with a college degree or credential. ‘We have a lot of work to do so that we don’t fail them.’ (Jon Marcus, “New efforts to raise U.S. college graduation rates,” The Hechinger Report, July 11, 2011.)

http://hechingerreport.org/content/new-efforts-to-raise-u-s-graduation-rates_5955/

Regarding remedial education, a 2010 report for the Education Commission of the States presented the following dour assessment:

For many policymakers, the high percentage of college students who require at least one remedial education course in reading, writing or mathematics is a symptom of the education system’s failure to adequately prepare students for postsecondary education. A quick review of the data illustrates how easy it is to come to this conclusion.

National data from the U.S. Department of Education on participation in remedial education found that 34% of all new entering college students required at least one remedial education class. Of those students who enrolled in a community college, 43% required some remedial education. While these numbers are alarming, more recent research on participation rates at the state level paint an even bleaker picture. Recent state analyses conducted by ECS reveal that many states have remediation participation rates between 30% and 40%, with some states having rates over 50%.

Most troubling of all is that the college completion rate for students who enroll in remedial education is extremely low. According to the U.S. Department of Education, only 17% of high school graduates who require at least one remedial reading course and 27% who require a remedial math course earn a bachelor’s degree. (Bruce Vandal, Getting Past Go: Rebuilding the Remedial Education Bridge to College Success, Education
0.2 The rationale—and responsibility -- The rationale for all students accessing higher education and succeeding there through completion was voiced by President Barack Obama in his 2011 State of Union Address. In that speech, this graduate of Columbia University and the Harvard Law School—left by his father when he was two, raised, in his words, “... by a wonderful mother and caring grandparents” (Barack Obama, “President Barack Obama Pens Essay on ‘Being the Father I Never Had,’” People, June 8, 2011.) -- made the case for access and success in higher education. As President Obama stated:

Maintaining our leadership in research and technology is crucial to America’s success. But if we want to win the future — if we want innovation to produce jobs in America and not overseas — then we also have to win the race to educate our kids.

Think about it. Over the next 10 years, nearly half of all new jobs will require education that goes beyond a high school education. And yet, as many as a quarter of our students aren’t even finishing high school. The quality of our math and science education lags behind many other nations. America has fallen to ninth in the proportion of young people with a college degree. And so the question is whether all of us — as citizens, and as parents — are willing to do what’s necessary to give every child a chance to succeed. (Remarks by the President in State of Union Address, January 25, 2011.)

The President also offered his view on those with first responsibility to make both access to college and graduation possible. Indeed, long before students enter the pre-K-12 system or higher education itself, Obama emphasized the importance of more fundamental social units—and parents. As he stated:

That responsibility begins not in our classrooms, but in our homes and communities. It’s family that first instills the love of learning in a child. Only parents can make sure the TV is turned off and homework gets done. We need to teach our kids that it’s not just the winner of the Super Bowl who deserves to be celebrated, but the winner of the science fair. (Applause.) We need to teach them that success is not a function of fame or PR, but of hard work and discipline. (Remarks by the President in State of Union Address, January 25, 2011.)

Like President Obama, Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretary of education in the administration of George H.W. Bush and now professor of
education at New York University, recognized the importance of the family in the achievement of children. Discussing reform initiatives today, she commented in an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* as follows:

**Families are children’s most important educators.** Our society must invest in parental education, prenatal care and preschool. Of course, schools must improve; everyone should have a stable, experienced staff, adequate resources and a balanced curriculum including the arts, foreign languages, history and science.

If every child arrived in school well-nourished, healthy and ready to learn, from a family with a stable home and a steady income, many of our educational problems would be solved. And that would be a miracle. (Diane Ravitch, “Waiting for a School Miracle,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 2011.)

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/opinion/01ravitch.html?_r=1&src=rep

Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley wrote an Educational Testing Service (ETS) study entitled *The Family: America’s Smallest School*; in that work, they appraised the importance of the family and home in a child’s education, as they state:

The family and the home are both critical education institutions where children begin learning long before they start school, and where they spend much of their time after they start school. So it stands to reason that improving a child’s home environment to make it more conducive to learning is critical if we are to improve the educational achievement of the nation’s students and close the achievement gaps. To do this, we need to develop cooperative partnerships in which families are allies in the efforts of teachers and schools. (Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, *The Family: America’s Smallest School*, Educational Testing Service, 2007, p. 3.)


Barton and Coley further discussed the relative importance—and interrelationship—of home and school on children’s learning, noting:

Schools are the primary agencies for teaching students, and there is a national focus on improving those schools — as there should be. Long before schools begin their jobs, however, teaching and learning take place in the family. The quality of that home and family teaching makes a large difference in how much children know and how ready they are to learn when they get to school. Home and family experiences and conditions continue to influence learning, too, once children start school. For all children, the height of the platform on which they stand when they begin school will make a difference in how much they achieve during that first year of school. Teachers have no magic wand to wave to
make all the platforms of equal height. Some students arrive at school able to read and armed with large vocabularies; others arrive unable to read and with limited vocabularies . . . .” (Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, The Family: America’s Smallest School, Educational Testing Service, 2007, p. 39.)


In James Traub’s view, from an important article he wrote in 2000, the relative importance of school and family on a child’s learning was as follows:

At bottom, the reason the kids at McDonough and practically every other elementary school in Hartford were failing, while the kids in the wealthy suburbs that began just on the other side of West Hartford were thriving, was not that the schools in Hartford were bad and the schools in the suburbs were good, but that each set of children was repeating patterns, and following trajectories, established before they arrived at school. McDonough’s children lived in a world bounded and defined by poverty. One teacher told me that when she talked to her sixth graders about college, they’d say: “What’s college? I don’t know anyone who’s been to college.” They didn’t know anyone who had succeeded in school, landed a good job, made it to the suburbs. (James Traub, “What No School Can Do,” New York Times Magazine, January 16, 2000.)

http://local.provplan.org/pp170/materials/what%20no%20school%20can%20do.htm

0.3 Fractured families and poverty—Unfortunately, despite the recognized importance of students’ families in their children’s educational development, today’s American family is often fractured, with the traditional structure—of two parents and children—less common. Indeed, according to an online posting by CDF President Marian Wright Edelman, many children do not live with both parents—or either parent, as she noted:

About 70 percent of all children -- but fewer than 40 percent of black children -- live with two parents. Twenty-three percent of all children and half of black children live with their mother only. Black children are more than twice as likely as white children, almost twice as likely as Hispanic children, and three-and-a-half times as likely as Asian/Pacific Islander children to live with neither parent. (Marian Wright Edelman, “A National Family Portrait,” HUFF POST—IMPACT, July 29, 2011.)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/a-national-family-portrai_b_913729.html

In another post, Edelman described the situation of minority children in stark terms, as follows: “A toxic cocktail of poverty, illiteracy, racial disparity, violence, out of wedlock birth, and massive incarceration is sentencing millions of children of color to dead end, powerless, and hopeless lives and threatens to undermine the past half century of racial and social progress.” (Marian Wright
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ Marian-Wright-Edelman/a-call-to-black-families.html

Valerie Strauss, blogging in The Washington Post, was pointed in her comments about the importance of home in a child’s learning vs. school-based factors. According to Strauss, “. . . Decades of studies show that home-based factors, especially the education level of a child’s mother, has the most influence on student achievement. Teachers may be the significant factor in student progress in the school building.” (Valerie Strauss, “Teach Plus changes Web site to reflect reality,” The Washington Post: The Answer Sheet, May 23, 2011.)

English teacher Patrick Welsh wrote similarly in a post on USATODAY occasioned by attendance at his high school’s commencement, stating

A lot of the truths about education in this country were on display Saturday as I watched the Class of 2011 graduate from T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Va. To me, none was more obvious than the fact that parents and family culture are the most important factors in a child’s education. It’s a fact that school administrators and the ever-expanding industry of "reformers" are loath to admit, lest they appear powerless in the face of the staggering academic differences among the kids who have been handed diplomas from America’s high schools this month. (Patrick Welsh, “The key to a good education: parents (not teachers),” USATODAY, June 20, 2011.)

According to Welsh, the view of some reformers today, while easy to state, was inaccurate in reality; in his words:

Reduced to its simplest terms, the rationale behind the attack on teachers is this: Children born to single, semi-literate, poverty-stricken 16- or 17-year-olds can, with the right teachers, reach the same level of academic skill as children born to parents such as Ben’s and Emma’s. Teachers would love to have such power, but statistics and common sense show that with few exceptions, things don’t work that way. (Patrick Welsh, “The key to a good education: parents (not teachers),” USATODAY, June 20, 2011.)

Anthony Cody, another educator, blogging in The Washington Post, was also critical of certain reformers, saying

We have leaders intent on proving that poverty is no obstacle to student success. After 24 years of teaching in Oakland, I can tell you that it is. Poverty and the social and environmental phenomena that are its
companions: hunger, violence, PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], chemical pollution, lack of access high quality daycare in early years, lack of access to vision, dental and medical care, and lack of access to books. Addressing ANY of these would yield better results than the policies underway that attach ever higher stakes to standardized tests, and continually expand the variety and frequency of tests. (Anthony Cody, “An educator on the Brooks-Ravitch debate,” The Washington Post—The Answer Sheet, July 10, 2011.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/an-educator-on-the-brooks-ravitch-debate/2011/07/10/glQArev36H_blog.html

To illustrate the effects of poverty on student success--particularly, that of minority youth--the words of CDF CEO Marian Wright Edelman are again relevant, as she stated:

Although there are more poor White than poor Black or Latino children, worsening income inequality and continuing racial disparities have an extra harsh combined impact on poor children of color. Many are pushed off the path of healthy development and into the Cradle to Prison Pipeline. Poor children are more likely to live in fragile families, lag in early childhood development, suffer abuse and neglect, be uninsured and in poor health, be denied a quality education, and experience other gaps that put them far behind non-poor peers. Millions of Black children are facing one of the worst crises since slavery, and in many areas, Hispanic and American Indian children are not far behind. (Marian Wright Edelman, “The State of America’s Children,” HUFF POST—IMPACT, July 15, 2011.) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/the-state-of-americas-chi_b_900405.html

The importance of fathers in parenting—and children’s academic achievement—cannot be overstated. Indeed, according to a publication by the Child Care Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS),

Involvement by fathers, the development of a positive relationship with their children, and the provision of child support have been shown to have a positive effect on children’s social, cognitive, and academic achievement, and behavior. Children do better in school when fathers are involved—they get better grades, are less likely to repeat a grade, and are less likely to be expelled. Even for very young children, good fathering contributes to the development of emotional security, curiosity, and math and verbal skills. (Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Through Child Care, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Bureau, April 2004, p. 1.)

http://researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/4398/pdf;jsessionid=0F0A263730140D8F98F09356DC3E98EB
On the “Promoting Responsible Fatherhood” website of HHS, the value of “involved fathers” to kids’ education is emphasized as follows:

Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior compared to children who have uninvolved fathers. Committed and responsible fathering during infancy and early childhood contributes emotional security, curiosity, and math and verbal skills. (“Promoting Responsible Fatherhood,” Federal Resource Site, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, last revised June 6, 2006.)
http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/Parenting/index.shtml

President Barack Obama addressed the importance of fathers in his 2011 Father’s Day essay; he wrote:

Of course, there are plenty of single parents who do a heroic job of raising their kids. I know this because I was fortunate enough to have one—a mother who never allowed my father’s absence to be an excuse for slacking off or not doing my best. But more and more kids are growing up today without their dads. And those young folks are more likely to struggle in school, try drugs, get into trouble and even wind up in jail. (Barack Obama, “President Barack Obama Pens Essay on ‘Being the Father I Never Had,’” People, June 8, 2011.)
http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20500603,00.html

A tragic 2011 newspaper account from the city of Youngstown, Ohio (in our MVCAP service area) illustrated the cycle of violence that can befall a fatherless child—and his family; that article, headlined “Shooting death of son mirrors that of his dad,” stated:

The murder of a South Side teen last week wasn’t the first time tragedy involving the death of a young father has struck the family.

Braylen Collins, 17, of West Glenaven Avenue, was killed July 29 in an exchange of gunfire in the area of West Evergreen Avenue and Summer Street. Police found Collins lying on the living room floor of a Summer Street home. He had been shot in the chest.

He was pronounced dead at St. Elizabeth Health Center.

Rhonda Woodall, Collins’ mother, said her son’s 1-year-old boy is now staying with her. The grieving mother said she wants to help the teen mother of her grandchild as much as possible because she knows all too well what the girl is experiencing.

Braylen’s father, Jermaine Collins, was shot and killed 17 years ago, one month before Braylen was born. Woodall and Collins had been involved
in a relationship, and she became pregnant with Braylen shortly before Jermaine Collins was killed.

Vindicator files show the elder Collins was found shot six times outside a home in the 500 block of Griffith Street on the city’s North Side in May 1994. The 23-year-old had been shot twice in the chest, twice in the right shoulder and twice in the right hip.


Yet, despite the importance of fathers, according to Belinda Luscombe, writing in *Time*, a “fathering gap” has developed in America. As she puts it,

Fathers from intact families are spending more time with their kids than their own fathers did, but more and more fathers are not living with their families. So those who have dads in the home are getting more time with those dads. Thus the gap in actual fathering time between those whose fathers live with them and those whose fathers don’t is getting wider. (Belinda Luscombe, “The Fathering Gap: Pitfalls of Modern Fatherhood,” *Time*, June 15, 2011.) [http://healthland.time.com/2011/06/15/the-fathering-gap-the-perils-of-modern-fatherhood/](http://healthland.time.com/2011/06/15/the-fathering-gap-the-perils-of-modern-fatherhood/)

And this fathering gap, per Luscombe, is related to privilege—specifically, the income and education of dads. She noted the following in that regard:

Fathers who are more engaged with their children tend to be wealthier and better educated. Fewer fathers from poor families live with their kids, although they may live with some of them. So kids from better-off families tend to have more time with their dads, with all the social and developmental benefits that can often entail. (Belinda Luscombe, “The Fathering Gap: Pitfalls of Modern Fatherhood,” *Time*, June 15, 2011.) [http://healthland.time.com/2011/06/15/the-fathering-gap-the-perils-of-modern-fatherhood/](http://healthland.time.com/2011/06/15/the-fathering-gap-the-perils-of-modern-fatherhood/)

Citing data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) analyzed by the Pew Research Center, Luscombe presented the following picture of today’s fathers’ life with their children:

... More than a quarter (27%) of all fathers with children under the age of 19 now live apart from at least some of their children. Black fathers (44%) are more than twice as likely to live apart from their kids as white fathers (21%), while just over a third of Hispanic fathers maintain a separate abode. Similarly, 40% of fathers who didn’t finish high school are not residing with their children, a living situation shared by only 7%


Michael J. Petrilli, Executive Vice President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, blogging in the column of Valerie Strauss, said this:

This fall, about 1 million very poor children will enroll in kindergarten in the United States. The vast majority of them will live in single-parent families headed by women in their late teens or early twenties. Most of their mothers will have dropped out of high school; most of their fathers are nowhere to be seen. Most live in urban or rural communities hit hard by the recession, places where unemployment, addiction, and violence are all too commonplace. (Valerie Strauss, “A school reformer gets real,” *The Washington Post: The Answer Sheet*, June 10, 2011.)


In this regard, a 2011 online article summarized the statistics on what it termed “the single parent household, overwhelmingly headed by mothers.” That article stated:

Across all racial lines, mothers have borne the brunt of child-rearing responsibility, the numbers show. The percentage of white children living just with their mother went from 16% in 1991 to 19% in 2009, the census said.

The corresponding percentage for Hispanic children went from 29% in 1991 to 26% in 2009. For black children, 47% lived with only their mother in 1991; 50% lived with only their mother in 2009. In 2009, 8% of Asian children lived just with their mother. (Craig Johnson, “Economy sends more kids to grandma’s house, CNN.com, July 28, 2011.)


Stanford law professor Ralph Richard Banks, author of the fall 2011 book *Is Marriage for White People? How the African American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone*, stated the following in regard to single-parent families and children raised in them during an interview for a *Time* website:

This has many undesirable outcomes not just for adults, but also for children who are the most vulnerable parties here. Seventy percent of black children today are born to non-married partners; most of these relationships do not last, which means most of these kids grow up with just one parent and this is not an optimal situation for child-rearing. (David Kaufman, “Is Marriage for White People?” *Time--Healthland*, August 31, 2011.)

http://healthland.time.com/2011/08/31/is-marriage-for-white-people/2/
A 2001 Canadian study of 138 children and parents in Quebec noted the value of fathers in child-rearing; Concordia University doctoral candidate and co-author Erin Pougnet said that “Fathers make important contributions in the development of their children’s behavior and intelligence.” According to Pougnet,

Compared with other children with absentee dads, kids whose fathers were active parents in early and middle childhood had fewer behaviour problems and higher intellectual abilities as they grew older -- even among socio-economically at-risk families. (“Fathers’ Presence Linked to Enhanced Intellect, Well-Being Among Children,” *ScienceDaily*, August 31, 2011.)


Getting “real,” per the blog-posting headline of Valerie Strauss, Michael Petrilli had continued:

You acknowledge — privately at least — that it’s unrealistic to expect all kids growing up in poverty to be able to “beat the odds” and graduate from college. (That’s why they’re called “odds.”) You recognize that, for most middle-class families, the path from poverty to prosperity has been a multi-generational journey. (And don’t overlook how many middle-class kids don’t exactly graduate from college!) (Valerie Strauss, “A school reformer gets real,” *The Washington Post: The Answer Sheet*, June 10, 2011.)


Petrilli concluded his post as follows: “Is this making you uncomfortable? Good. If we are to get beyond the ‘100 percent proficiency’ or ‘all students college and career ready’ rhetoric, these are the conversations we need to have.” (Valerie Strauss, “A school reformer gets real,” *The Washington Post: The Answer Sheet*, June 10, 2011.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/a-school-reformer-gets-real/2011/06/09/AGcNWvNH_blog.html

**0.4 The achievement gap**—Thus, despite their importance for America’s future, college access and success for all students are too frequently not the prime topics of concern today regarding education in America. Rather, our focus is on the achievement gap—which Newark Mayor Cory Booker said was “as wide as the Grand Canyon.” (Maureen Downey, “Newark Mayor Cory Booker: Charter school advocates are modern-day freedom fighters,” *AJC Get Schooled*, June 21, 2011.)

Booker commented on the context giving rise to this situation in an August 2011 posting; he wrote:

Still in America, one's destiny is not determined by merit alone; by how hard one is willing to work, by one's innate acumen or by how much one is willing to sacrifice for their dreams and ambitions. Instead, destinies in America are strongly and even savagely influenced by the zip code one is born in, how much money one's parents have, or put simply, whether one is fortunate enough -- lucky enough -- to have access to decent, safe housing, adequate health care and a thorough education. Frustratingly, decades after some of the most compelling and articulate dreamers gifted our nation progress, we still live in a country where race and socio-economic status are stubbornly, strongly and undeniably correlated with the quality of one's life outcomes. . . .

I see hardworking kids assigned to schools with little track record of high achievement. Many children press on to inadequate high schools, receiving good grades along the way only to find themselves at a community college where they are told they must take remedial classes -- classes they now have to find a way to pay for. (Cory Booker, “A Dream Anew,” HUFF POST—BLACKVOICES, August 24, 2011.)
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/cory-booker/a-dream-anew_b_934969.html

As Amanda Paulson blogged in The Christian Science Monitor, “No education issue has received more attention in recent years--but with less apparent progress--than the achievement gaps for minority and low-income students.” (Amanda Paulson, “Persistent achievement gap vexes education reformers: Six takeaways,” The Christian Science Monitor, undated.)
http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2010/1214/Persistent-achievement-gap-vexes-education-reformers-Six-takeaways/Progress-on-achievement-gaps-sluggish

Public Law 107-110 of the 107th Congress was “An Act To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind.” (PUBLIC LAW 107–110—JAN. 8, 2002, 115 STAT. 1425.)
http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf Title I (“Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged”) of the federal legislation No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 addressed the achievement gap in SEC. 1001 (“Statement Of Purpose”), (3), listing as one of its purposes the following: “closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers.” (Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.), as amended, ED.gov, U.S. Department of Education website.)
http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html

Paul Barton and Richard Coley commented on the achievement gap in their 2009 Policy Information Report for ETS; they stated:
Gaps in school achievement among racial/ethnic groups and between students from different socioeconomic circumstances are well documented. They are wide and persistent, well known and widely acknowledged. They arrive early and stay late — beginning before birth and continuing through to high school graduation for those fortunate to obtain a diploma. (Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, *Parsing the Achievement Gap II*, Educational Testing Service, Policy Information Report, April 2009, p. 5) [http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf](http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf)

Indeed, UCLA professor Tyrone C. Howard said achievement gaps are referred to “... as one of the most pressing and difficult educational and social challenges of the 21st century.” He conceptualizes the achievement gap as “... the disparity in academic outcomes between African American, Native American, and Latino students, and their White and certain Asian American peers.” Howard cites others to indicate this gap “... is reflected most clearly in grades, standardized test scores, high school graduation rates, placement in special education and advanced placement courses, and suspension and expulsion rates (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).” (Tyrone C. Howard, *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms*, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, p. 12.)

According to Abraham H. Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), "It is fair to say that education equity is one of the major civil rights issues of our time.” Said Foxman in a 2011 press release announcing the creation of a new ADL Task Force:

It has been 57 years since the Supreme Court issued its landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and yet American schools are still substantially segregated. He added: ‘The quality of public education varies widely from state to state, and community to community. There is a racial and ethnic achievement gap in our public schools that cannot be ignored.’ (“ADL Task Force To Consider Solutions To Address Racial And Achievement Disparities In Public Schools,” press release, Anti-Defamation League, June 15, 2011.) [http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Education_01/6069_01.htm](http://www.adl.org/PresRele/Education_01/6069_01.htm)

**0.5 What is it?**--There are several questions to be addressed about the achievement gap. First, *what is it?* The "achievement gap" in education refers to differences in academic performance among *groups* of students. Per The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, “Compared to whites, significant gaps for African-American and Hispanic students are evident in virtually every measure of achievement: NAEP math and reading test scores, high school completion rates, college enrollment and college completion rates.” (“The Facts on the Gap,” The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University website.) [http://www.agi.harvard.edu/projects/thegap.php](http://www.agi.harvard.edu/projects/thegap.php)
According to the website of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), “Achievement gaps occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (that is, larger than the margin of error).” (“Achievement Gaps,” National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) website, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences.) http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps/

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education offered the following: “The achievement gap between Black and White students is defined as the difference between the average score for Black students and the average score for White students. Comparisons are made for main NAEP between the most recent assessment year (2007) and all previous assessment years.” (Alan Vanneman, Linda Hamilton, Janet Baldwin Anderson, and Taslima Rahman, Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress—Statistical Analysis Report, NCES 2009-455, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, July 2009, p. 4.) http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2009455.pdf

0.6 When and why?--Next, when is an achievement gap first noticed and why does it exist? Children’s Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman addressed the early origin of the achievement gap—and its link to poverty. In Edelman’s words:

“Right now, 15.5 million children in America live in poverty. Nearly one in four children under five is poor and over 40 percent are Black. At nine months of age, poor Black children are already behind their higher-income peers in cognitive development. The gap is wider at 24 months. By kindergarten, poor Black children have to beat higher odds to catch up and as various tests reveal, many never do. We want to change those odds.” (Marian Wright Edelman, “Ract [sic] to the Top Early Learning Challenge,” The Madison Times, June 3, 2011.) http://www.themadisontimes.com/news_details.php?news_id=1061


A 2010 Harvard economics paper by Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr. cites sources on the early appearance of the achievement gap as follows: “At nine months old, there are no detectable cognitive differences between black and white babies (Roland Fryer and Steve Levitt, forthcoming). Differences emerge as early as age two, and by the time black children enter kindergarten
they lag whites by 0.64 standard deviations in math and 0.40 in reading (Fryer and Levitt, 2004).” (Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr., “Are High-Quality Schools Enough to Increase Achievement Among the Poor?” November 2010, pp. 1-2.)
http://www.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/fryer/files/HCZ_Nov_2010.pdf

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/01/opinion/01ravitch.html?_r=1&src=rechp

Ronald Ferguson, of the Graduate School of Education and Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, was quoted as follows: “The gap is there on the first day of kindergarten because of what these kids haven’t experienced before they ever got to school,” Ferguson says. "And those gaps have to do with a combination of resources and parenting skills.” (Tim Louis Macaluso, “Eye on Education, Part I: City school students,” City Newspaper, June 8, 2011.)

Jack P. Shonkoff, Harvard professor and director of its Center on the Developing Child, and Deborah A. Phillips, editors of a study on early childhood development, observed the following regarding gaps:

Striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten. These differences are strongly associated with social and economic circumstances, and they are predictive of subsequent academic performance. Redressing these disparities is critical, both for the children whose life opportunities are at stake and for a society whose goals demand that children be prepared to begin school, achieve academic success, and ultimately sustain economic independence and engage constructively with others as adult citizens.

According to a U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2010 report advocating early learning, “Achievement gaps develop well before children begin kindergarten.” [emphasis in original] In the words of this report:

Because school readiness and language development are key predictors of a child’s academic success, they are the focus of early childhood education programs. Unfortunately, many children who do not participate in high-quality pre-K or early childhood programs are in general not fully prepared to begin school. In the United States, those most likely to begin kindergarten at an academic disadvantage are low-income and minority children. Research also tells us that students who
begin school behind have a tendency to remain behind throughout their academic careers. (Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education, U.S. Chamber of Commerce—Institute for a Competitive Workforce, 2010, p. 8.)

Susan Ochshorn, founder of the consulting firm ECE PolicyWorks, advocated giving priority to early childhood education; she blogged: “A growing number of children in the United States are not ready for school. Studies show that at least half of the educational achievement gap between poor children and their more advantaged peers is evident in the kindergarten classroom.” (Susan Ochshorn, “Prioritizing Early Childhood Education: We Can’t Afford to Wait,” HUFFPOST EDUCATION, June 21, 2011.)
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-ochshorn/prioritizing-early-childh_b_880959.html

As for why the achievement gap occurs, one academic observer, Adeyemi Stembridge, professor at NYU and project leader of its Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, gave this response: “The honest answer is no one knows definitively what is causing the achievement gap.” Rather than an achievement gap, Stembridge referred to an “education debt.” He also spoke of the impact of history on minorities, saying “The disenfranchisement of black and other racial minorities, the prevention of these communities from participating in the political process, the institutionalized racism . . . these things have placed certain groups--particularly African Americans--at a historical disadvantage.” Professor Stembridge also mentioned the influence of poverty, noting "Black folks are more likely to live in poverty than other groups," he says. "When you factor in that there are high concentrations of poor people living in small spaces, the economics don’t always lend themselves to strong academic outcomes." He also said children from low-income families may have fewer “protective factors.” As he put it: "Kids in suburban schools are more likely to have educated parents," Stembridge says. "They are more likely to live in a household where economics aren’t an ever-present threatening factor. They are less likely to have moved in a year, as many urban students have." (Tim Louis Macaluso, “Eye on Education, Part I: City school students,” City Newspaper, June 8, 2011.)

Regarding the achievement gap, according to a June 2011 report by the College Board, even “framing of the problem is itself problematic (Perry, Steele et al. 2003; Love 2004.)” Per the report,

Love (2004) posits that the achievement gap is a form of ‘majoritarian’ storytelling that fosters the perception of white intellectual superiority. Perry, Steele and Hilliard (2003) suggest that the standard against which achievement disparities are assessed should be some measure of excellence for which all students should be striving rather than the
Nonetheless, in the view of one civil rights activist, a number of factors combine—and result in an achievement gap: "The toxic cocktail of poverty, illiteracy, racial disparities, violence, massive incarceration and family breakdown is sentencing millions of children to dead end and hopeless lives and threatens to undermine the past half century of racial and social progress," says Marian Wright Edelman, CDF President. "These ingredients ultimately combine to produce striking gaps in educational success, life expectancy and other important outcomes. We believe there are ways to avoid these outcomes." ("Symposium Focuses on Positioning Young Black Boys for Educational Success," PR Newswire, June 14, 2011.)

Tulane University psychology professor Oscar A. Barbarin III was quoted as follows in a blog account of a 2011 symposium on closing the achievement gap among black males and other groups: “The convergence of ‘maleness, ethnicity, and poverty,’ he said, contributes to academic outcomes for black boys, which tend to be more negative than those for black girls.” Thurman L. Bridges, education professor at Morgan State University, asked: “When do we begin to focus our energies on the repressive social system black boys are forced to live in this country?” He continued: “We should focus our attention on assessing their resilience, their ability to survive, given the society is built for their demise.” (Mary Ann Zehr, “Experts Call for Early Focus on Black Boys’ Nonacademic Skills,” Education Week, June 15, 2011.)

The recent report of the College Board offered these startling statistics: “Collectively, the pathway data show that more than 51 percent of Hispanic males, 45 percent of African American males, 42 percent of Native American males and 33 percent of Asian American males ages 15 to 24 will end up unemployed, incarcerated or dead. It has become an epidemic, and one that we must solve by resolving the educational crisis facing young men of color.” (John Michael Lee Jr. and Tafaya Ransom, The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, CollegeBoard Advocacy & Policy Center, June 2011, p. 50.)

According to a faculty observer, “The well-documented academic disparities between many immigrant children and their peers in high school are
rooted in early-childhood education, said Robert Crosnoe, a sociology professor at the University of Texas at Austin.” (Mary Ann Zehr, “Studies Provide Guidance for Teaching Immigrant Preschoolers,” Education Week, May 5, 2011.)

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/05/05/30preschool.h30.html?tkn=UTVFk8TPbSpXjJV5SRHGwzH%2BsALW46noGxVR&cmp=clp-edweek

Various reasons have been offered for focusing on early childhood. Per researchers Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, parenting during this formative period—and a family’s socioeconomic status—mattered to a child’s intellectual development. As they state: “The amount of parenting per hour and the quality of the verbal content associated with that parenting were strongly related to the social and economic status of the family and the subsequent IQ of the child.” (Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, “American parenting of language-learning children: Persisting differences in family-child interactions observed in natural home environments,” Developmental Psychology, Vol 28(6), November 1992, pp.1096-1105, APA PsycNET abstract.)

http://psycnet.apa.org/indexcfm?fa=buy.optionToBuy&id=1993-09151-001

Again, Hart and Risley linked this growth in the use of language to the socioeconomic status and parenting in the home, stating

Results indicated that the most important factors to language acquisition are the economic advantages of children’s homes and the frequency of language experiences. The basic findings from the study are that children who were born into homes with fewer economic resources learn fewer words, have fewer experiences with words in interactions with other persons, and acquire a vocabulary of words more slowly. (Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children, Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Company, 1995, ERIC Abstract.)

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED387210&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED387210

Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley comment on what they call “gaps in critical home experiences” and relate them to achievement gaps, stating

Not only is the nation’s attention focused on raising student achievement generally, and increasing the supply of students ready to excel in math and science, it is riveted also on reducing the large achievement gaps that exist between minority and non-minority students, and between children from low-income families and families with higher incomes. When people speak about the need for education reform, they often mean that there is a need to reduce the achievement gaps between these groups.

This report clearly establishes that the gaps in critical home experiences mirror the gaps in early school achievement — gaps that


In a 2009 report, Barton and Coley reiterated this assessment, as they noted: “The bottom line is that gaps correlated with school achievement continue to show up in the life and school experiences of minority and low-SES children.” (Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, *Parsing the Achievement Gap II*, Educational Testing Service, Policy Information Report, April 2009, p. 32.)

http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf

According to a 2011 posting by Sarah Garland of *The Hechinger Report* on meetings in San Diego between preschool and kindergarten teachers, some kindergarten students suffered from a lack of exposure to nursery rhymes at home; they stated: “Among the revelations, the kindergarten teachers told the preschool teachers that their 5-year-olds, many of them immigrants, struggled with stories covered in the kindergarten reading curriculum. They weren’t hearing English-language classics like “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” or “Humpty Dumpty” at home. So the preschools began incorporating those stories into their curricula, to help better prepare their students.” (Sarah Garland, “Advocates See Pre-K-3 as Key Early Education Focus,” *Education Week*, June 14, 2011.)


Others involved in early education recognize the criticality of this period in a child’s life. Diana Rauner, from the Ounce of Prevention Fund in Chicago, emphasized this view as follows: “The most important time for us to intervene is really in the first 1,000 days of life, a time when the brain is developing so quickly and when interactions with adults matter so much to children’s developing sense of who they are and their language development . . . . The only way we’re going to systemically break that achievement gap, close that achievement gap, is by investing in early education.” (Diana Rauner quoted in John Merrow, “Chicago Program Seeks To Close Achievement Gap for Youngest Students,” *PBS NewsHour*, April 5, 2011.)

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/jan-june11/readinessgap_04-05.html#

Blogging in *The Huffington Post*, education correspondent John Merrow wrote matter-of-factly about the importance of early learning for low-income kids to close gaps: “Today the science is crystal clear: Children living in poverty who have access to high-quality care and education during their first five years are more likely to develop the skills necessary to succeed in school and in life. We can close the vocabulary gap (as well as gaps in nutrition and health care).” (John Merrow, “The Preschool Education Issues in America,” *HUFFPOST Education*, April 6,
Per Richard Rothstein, several factors related to the achievement gap; as he noted:

**The achievement gap has many causes:** less adequate early childhood preparation is one, along with health differences; the absence of positive peer and community influences; the lack of high quality after-school, weekend, and summer experiences; insufficient school resources (including high quality teachers); excessively large classes; family economic stress; unstable housing; and more. Closing the achievement gap will require simultaneous and intensive mutually reinforcing efforts in all of these areas. (Richard Rothstein on the many causes of the achievement gap, Harvard Education Letter, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011)  

Pedro A. Noguera, New York University professor, commented further on the learning experiences of poor children, stating

Despite all of the attention that has been focused on the achievement gap for the last several years, we have consistently ignored the most obvious factor perpetuating the gap: the inadequate learning conditions to which poor children, especially children of color, are exposed. In most urban areas and in most communities where poor children are concentrated, the quality of education provided is generally inferior to that made available to more affluent children. Many poor children attend schools that are unsafe, over-crowded, under-resourced and subject to high turnover of key personnel.” (Pedro A. Noguera, response, “How Can We Close The Achievement Gap,” NationalJournal Expert Blogs: Education, July 27, 2009.)  

A 2007 report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation had offered a similar assessment regarding the inadequacy of education being provided to poor and minority students in America, as it declared:

But the current educational system is failing young people, especially low-income African-American and Hispanic students. Across the nation, 30 percent of high school students (and nearly 50 percent of black and Hispanic students) fail to earn a diploma. Even students who graduate from high school and enter college often lack the knowledge and skills they need to be successful: 30 percent of incoming first-year college students are required to enroll in remedial courses, and only a minority of these students end up earning a degree.
Young people growing up in tough urban neighborhoods are least well served by the current system. Too often, they are consigned to schools that fail them systematically: fail to keep them safe, to challenge them to learn at high levels, to enable them to develop a vision of possibility for themselves in the world beyond their neighborhoods. Students may progress from grade to grade and from school to school without mastering key subjects and developing the skills they need to graduate from high school, be successful in college, and participate in the economy. For these young people, the educational pipeline—the sequence of continuous learning from early childhood through elementary, middle, and high school grades and postsecondary education and training—has failed to deliver. (Jeanne Jehl, The Connection Strategy: Preparing Young People To Succeed In College and Beyond, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007, p. 3.)

http://www.aecf.org/~/media/PublicationFiles/Connection_Strategy.pdf

Indeed, for some students, there seems to be a “school-to-prison” pipeline in operation. A July 2011 federal initiative by the Justice Department and U.S. Department of Education related to that pipeline. According to Education Secretary Arne Duncan, “When our young people start getting locked up early . . . they start to move out of the schools, out of the pipeline to success.” Per guest blogger Nirvi Shah, this new effort “. . . targets school discipline policies that end up pushing children into the juvenile-justice system for crimes and rule-breaking on campus—and keeping them from pursuing their education.” (Michele McNeil, “New Initiative Targets ‘School-to-Prison’ Pipeline,” Education Week—Politics K-12, July 21, 2011.) http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/07/from_guest_blogger_nirvi_shah.html

According to an online newspaper account, The San Diego Unified School District planned to begin a reform project in the fall of 2011 regarding the African-American achievement gap. The posting included this quotation: “The underachievement of African-Americans in this district and nationwide is a travesty and a crime against children,’ said Shirley Weber, executive director of the San Diego Association of African Educators. ‘If we get every child to get to school and we don’t change the academic experience for them, we are not doing anything.” (Maureen Magee, “Schools tackle African-American achievement gap,” SIGNED SAN DIEGO, July 6, 2011.) http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/jul/06/schools-tackle-black-achievement-gap/

In Portland, OR, school board member Ruth Adkins spoke of a 2011 “Cradle to Career” initiative to help students succeed; she stated:

. . . The new Cradle to Career coalition, an unprecedented collaborative effort is under way among schools, local governments, nonprofits and the business community. The goal is that by aligning existing city, county, and private programs and resources, we can, as a community, help give Portland’s children the best possible chance for success.
This Portland Public Schools (PPS) board member noted further the premise of the new program, as follows:

For our part, PPS needs to ensure that everything we do is based on the core conviction that all children can and will succeed. As adults, we need to provide children with the supports and opportunities they need to help their talents emerge and their strengths grow. *The responsibility for the disparities among our young people rests with adults, not the children.* [emphasis added]  (Ruth Adkins, “Schools’ equity efforts are promising,” *The Portland Tribune*, July 21, 2011.)


**0.7 What are the statistics?**--What specific statistics underlie the existence of an achievement gap? Again, according to the U.S. Department of Education’s NCES, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data are extensive:

White students, however, had higher scores than Black students, on average, on all assessments. While the nationwide gaps in 2007 were narrower than in previous assessments at both grades 4 and 8 in mathematics and at grade 4 in reading, White students had average scores at least 26 points higher than Black students in each subject, on a 0-500 scale.  (Alan Vanneman, Linda Hamilton, Janet Baldwin Anderson, and Taslima Rahman, *Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress—Statistical Analysis Report*, NCES 2009-455, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, July 2009, p. iii.)


At the state level, gaps in grade 4 mathematics existed in 2007 in the 46 states for which results were available . . . . At grade 8, mathematics gaps existed in 2007 in the 41 states for which results were available . . . . At the state level, gaps in grade 4 reading existed in 2007 in the 44 states for which results were available . . . . At grade 8, reading gaps existed in 2007 in 41 of the 42 states for which results were available. In Hawaii, the 7-point difference between Black and White students’ scores in 2007 was not statistically significant, and thus there was no gap for Hawaii.” (Alan Vanneman, Linda Hamilton, Janet Baldwin Anderson, and Taslima Rahman, *Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress—Statistical Analysis Report*, NCES 2009-455, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, July 2009, p. iv.)


*The Condition of Education 2011* also presents considerable NAEP data to support the continued existence of an achievement gap in reading at the 4th-,
8th-, and 12th-grade levels, despite some rising scores for all groups of students. According to that report:

In 2009, the average reading score of Black 4th-grade students was less than that of White 4th-grade students by 26 points. This gap was not measurably different from the gap in 2007 but was smaller than the gaps in all other assessment years prior to 2007. In 2009, Hispanic 4th-grade students scored 25 points lower than their White peers; this gap was not measurably different from the gaps in 2007 or 1992.

At grade 8, average reading scores were higher in 2009 than in 2007 for all racial/ethnic groups. Black and Hispanic 8th-grade students scored lower than their White counterparts in 2009, by 26 and 24 points, respectively; neither of these gaps was measurably different from the corresponding gaps in 2007 and 1992.

The average scores for White and Asian/Pacific Islander 12th-graders were higher in 2009 than in 2005 by 3 and 11 points, respectively, while scores for Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians/Alaska Natives did not measurably change. In 2009, White 12th-grade students scored 27 points higher in reading than Black students and 22 points higher than Hispanic students. Neither score gap was measurably different from the respective score gaps in previous assessment years.” (Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, editors, The Condition of Education 2011, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2011-034, May 2011, p. 4.)


As for an achievement gap in mathematics, The Condition of Education 2011 offered considerable data, at the 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade levels in that regard:

At grade 4, [re:] the average mathematics scores in 2009 . . . Black 4th-grade students scored 26 points lower than their White peers in 2009. This gap was not measurably different from that in 2007 but was smaller than the gap in 1990, when the average score of Black 4th-grade students was 32 points lower than that of their White peers. The 21-point achievement gap between White and Hispanic 4th-grade students in 2009 was not measurably different from the gap in 2007 or the gap in 1990.

Black and Hispanic 8th-grade students scored lower than their White counterparts in 2009, by 32 and 26 points, respectively; neither of these gaps was measurably different from the corresponding gaps in 2007 and 1990.

At grade 12, average mathematics scores were higher in 2009 than in 2005 for all racial/ethnic groups. In 2009, White 12th-grade students scored 30 points higher in mathematics than Black students and 23 points higher than Hispanic students. Neither gap was measurably

In *history*, another of eight subjects tested under the NAEP, an achievement gap persisted. According to a newspaper account of 2010 results, although that gap narrowed since the last administration in 2006, it still separated racial groups; the reporter noted that “On average, for instance, white eighth-grade students scored 274 on the latest test, 21 points higher than Hispanic students and 23 points above black students; in 2006, white students outperformed Hispanic students by 23 points and black students by 29 points.” (Sam Dillon, “U.S. Students Remain Poor at History, Tests Show,” *The New York Times*, June 14, 2011.) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/15/education/15history.html?_r=1&hpw

Similarly, the report of 2010 NAEP results in *geography* indicated generally-rising minority student scores—but a persistent achievement gap at all (4th-, 8th-, and 12th-) grade levels. As that report (repetitively) stated:

In 2010, the average [4th-grade] scores of White and Asian/Pacific Islander students were not significantly different from each other, and both groups scored higher on average than Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. (*Geography 2010: National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grades 4, 8, and 12, The Nation’s Report Card*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics—Institute of Education Sciences, NCES 2011-467, 2011, p. 9) http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2010/2011467.pdf

In 2010, the average [8th-grade] scores for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students were not significantly different from each other, and both were higher than the scores for Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students. (*Geography 2010: National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grades 4, 8, and 12, The Nation’s Report Card*, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics—Institute of Education Sciences, NCES 2011-467, 2011, p. 22) http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2010/2011467.pdf

In 2010, [12th-grade] White students scored 29 points higher on average in geography than Black students and 19 points higher than Hispanic students (figure 22). There was no significant change in either gap in comparison to earlier assessment years. (Geography 2010: National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grades 4, 8, and 12, The Nation’s Report Card, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics—Institute of Education Sciences, NCES 2011-467, 2011, p. 38) 


When it comes to graduation from high school, another gap can be seen among groups of U.S. students. According to Andrew Rotherham, former education aide to President Clinton, “An achievement gap also persists: only 64% of Hispanic students and 62% of African Americans graduated in 2008, while 81% of white students did.” (Andrew J. Rotherham, “Dropout Rates Dropping, but Don’t Celebrate Yet,” Time, November 30, 2010.) 

http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2033524,00.html

This achievement gap also exists—and appears to be widening—in student scores on the ACT. According to an August 2011 post by Valerie Strauss in The Washington Post, “The scores, being released today, show that the achievement gap between the top-scoring students — Asians and whites — and the lowest scoring — African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians — has grown slightly between 2007 and 2011.” Strauss summarized the ACT results, by ethnic group, as follows:

According to ACT, average ACT composite scores for Asian and white graduates increased between 2007 and 2011. The average composite scores look like this:

- for Asians, 22.6 in 2007 to 23.6 in 2011
- for whites, 22.1 in 2007 to 22.4 in 2011
- for African Americans, the score remained at 17 for both years
- for Hispanics, the score remained at 18.7 for both years

In addition, racial-achievement gaps also existed in the percentage of students whose scores, according to ACT, indicated their readiness for higher education. Per the online posting by Molly Redden, “Twenty-five percent of the class of 2011 met the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in math, science, English, and reading. The benchmarks are the ACT’s measurement of the likelihood a student will earn a C or higher in a typical first-year college course
in that subject.” Writer Redden then commented on the disaggregated scores; she noted:

The percentages of students meeting benchmarks vary widely among races, too. Forty-one percent of Asian students and 31 percent of white students had the minimum scores for college readiness in all four areas, compared with 15 percent of Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, 11 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives, 11 percent of Hispanic/Latino students, and 4 percent of black students. (Molly Redden, “ACT Takers Make Marginal Gains in College Readiness, but Achievement Gaps Remain,” The Chronicle of Higher Education—Students, August 17, 2011.)

As ACT succinctly stated in its report on the scores, “Just over 4 in 10 (41%) Asian graduates met all four College Readiness Benchmarks in 2011, more than graduates from all other racial/ethnic groups. African American graduates were least likely to meet the Benchmarks—4% met all four.” (The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2011, ACT, p. 5.)

College blogger Lynn O'Shaughnessy’s comment on the ACT results was both succinct and poignant; she said: “What’s really shocking is that so many kids emerge from high school unprepared to do college level work without anybody raising concerns.” (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “Are Only 1 out of 4 Freshmen Ready for College,” CBS moneywatch.com, August 17, 2011.)

ACT also reported the percentage of students in each race/ethnicity that took a core curriculum in high school, which ACT recommends for its testing:

Seventy-four percent of all 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates took at least a minimum core high school curriculum to prepare them for college.

Asian students (81%) were most likely to complete a core curriculum, while 78% of Pacific Islander and 76% of White students did so. Smaller percentages of African American (69%), American Indian (63%), and Hispanic (72%) students completed a core curriculum. (The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2011, ACT, p. 15.)

Writer Scott Jaschik, posting on Inside Higher Ed, highlighted racial-achievement gaps even among underrepresented students who had taken a core curriculum; he noted: “But the data also show that Asian and white
students who do not take the core courses end up, on average, with higher ACT scores than do those black and Latino students who do.” (Scott Jaschik, “Modest Gains on ACT,” Inside Higher Ed, August 17, 2011.)


0.8 Still exist in college?--Next, does the achievement gap still exist among college-age youth? According to an article by Patricia Gandara, education professor of the University of California at Davis, this gap persists; as she stated:

African American, Latino, and Native American students begin school behind their White and Asian classmates, and this gap continues to grow throughout the years of schooling (NCES, 2000a; 2000b), resulting in relatively small percentages of Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans going on to four-year colleges, and fewer still represented among college graduates. For example, African Americans were only 11 percent of all college students in 1997-98 while they comprised 14.3 percent of the college-age population, and Latinos held only 8.6 percent of the seats in higher education institutions, although they comprised a similar percentage (14.4) of college-age population. (Patricia Gandara, “Meeting Common Goals: Linking K-12 and College Interventions,” in William G. Tierney and Linda Serra Hagedorn, editors, Increasing Accessing To College: Extending Possibilities For All Students, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002, p. 81.)

According to a June 2011 report of the College Board, matriculation statistics bore out a gap among college-age youth, as it indicated the following:

As of 2007, 67.2 percent of all high school graduates enrolled in a two-year or four-year college immediately after completing high school (Lee and Rawls 2010). Though many students complete the process for admission to college, others find that certain factors, such as family finances, prevent them from enrolling in college. While 69.5 percent of white students who graduate from high school immediately enroll in college, only 55.6 percent of African American and 60.9 percent of Hispanic high school graduates enroll in a two- or four-year college immediately after completing high school. (John Michael Lee Jr. and Tafaya Ransom, The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress, CollegeBoard Advocacy & Policy Center, June 2011, p. 14.)


An August 2011 post in The New York Times indicated the percentage of U.S. students from various ethnic groups in college; it stated: “Thirty-two percent of Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in 2010, compared with 38 percent of blacks, 62 percent of Asians and 43 percent of whites.” (Sabrina
An earlier study by Clifford Adelman showed a correlation between students’ SES and graduation from college; in his words, “Of student demographic characteristics, only one—socioeconomic status—was significantly associated with degree completion, though in a modest manner.” (Clifford Adelman, The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006. p. xxiii.)

Alberto Cabrera and researchers at Penn State also found the odds that students earn a college degree are correlated with their socioeconomic status; as they stated, “By 1992, 35% of the 1982 High School Class earned a college degree. Among Lowest-SES students, merely 13% managed to do so. In contrast, 57% of Highest-SES students completed their college degree.” (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 28.)

Looking at this “graduation gap” by initial institution of enrollment and income—over time—and Andrew Rotherham pointed out the following: “Unfortunately only about 57 percent complete a degree within six years. Among those choosing two-year colleges the completion rate is only about 30 percent. Most stunning are gaps in completion by income. In 1972 thirty-eight percent of high-income Americans earned a bachelor’s degree by age 24. Now, 82 percent do. Among low-income students, however, that figure was 7 percent in 1972 and it’s 8 percent now.” (Andrew J. Rotherham, “Low Graduation Rates: It’s Not Just Student-Athletes,” Time, April 7, 2011.)

As for college access by low-income students in the future, Justin Akers Chacon was not sanguine, when he noted that “Academically qualified low-income high school graduates have seen their enrollment in college drop from 54 percent to 40 percent between 1992 and 2004, according to a 2010 report to Congress by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. With the new cuts, this rate is likely to go down much further.” (Justin Akers Chacon, “Don’t shortchange our youth,” The Vindicator, April 6, 2011, p. A15.)

Laura W. Perna, higher education professor at the University of Maryland, stressed the importance of academic readiness for underrepresented groups to succeed in postsecondary study; as she stated, “Most important, to ensure that students are academically qualified to enroll in college, college preparation programs must improve the academic preparation of low-income, African American, Hispanic, and other disadvantaged groups of students.” (Laura W. Perna, “The Key to College Access: Rigorous Academic Preparation,” in William G. Tavernise, “Young Hispanics’ College Enrollment Rose 24% in Year, Study Says,” The New York Times, August 25, 2011.)
The rationale for this emphasis is clear, given the difficulty students have succeeding if they must take remedial classes in college. According to Katherine L. Hughes and Judith Scott-Clayton, “Students placed in developmental education, particularly at the bottom level, have low odds of eventually moving on to credit coursework.” (Katherine L. Hughes and Judith Scott-Clayton, Assessing Developmental Assessment in Community Colleges, CCRC Working Paper No. 19, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, February 2011, p. 4.) 332_856(1).pdf http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=856

Specifically, according to Hughes and Scott-Clayton, students have difficulty completing developmental course sequences—and fail to advance. In their words: “As shown in Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2010), only 30–40% of students referred to remediation complete the entire sequence of courses to which they are assigned. Many students never enroll in the course to which they are assigned, and many drop out before a grade is received.” (Katherine L. Hughes and Judith Scott-Clayton, Assessing Developmental Assessment in Community Colleges, CCRC Working Paper No. 19, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, February 2011, p. 16.) 332_856(1).pdf http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=856

0.9 What “stacks the odds”?--What are the correlates that have been identified with “stacked odds” regarding students’ access and success? According to Clifford Adelman’s updated statistical study for the U.S. Department of Education, there are four demographic factors of significance that he quantified: “first generation college status”; “race/ethnicity and gender”; “being a male”; and “highest third of family income.” As Adelman explained:

Of the independent variables within the model, four are significant, even though that significance is undercut by the statistical characteristics of the model as a whole. The most significant \( p < 0.01 \) is first generation college status, with a Delta-p statistic that says the probability of completing a bachelor’s degree is reduced by roughly 21 percent for first generation students. 24 Race/ethnicity and gender are significant at \( p < 0.05 \), with the messages of the Delta-p that minority status reduces the probability of earning a bachelor’s degree by 17 percent, and being male reduces that probability by 11 percent. Falling in the highest third of family income is marginally significant. (Clifford Adelman, The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006. p. xxiii-xxiv.) http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/toolbox.pdf

However, despite these significant factors, Adelman emphasized the importance of academic preparation for success in college, stating “The academic intensity of the student’s high school curriculum still counts more

Similarly, Alberto Cabrera, et al. linked “academic resources” to college success for students from all income groups—particularly, the poor; in their words,

Consistent with Adelman (1999), we find academic resources to have a substantial effect on degree completion across all SES groups. Compared to students poorly prepared academically, moderately and highly prepared students were 9% and 23% respectively more likely to complete a college degree within 10 years of graduating from high school. The effect of academic preparation among Lowest-SES students is even more pronounced. Being moderately prepared or highly prepared for college increased their chances to secure a degree by 9% and 29% for this SES group, respectively. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 29.)
http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Watson Scott Swail and Adriane Williams also echoed this view, linking secondary coursework to high school achievement and graduation as well as matriculation—particularly, for students of color--to higher education, attendance, and persistence in college; they stated

As suggested, the rigor of courses taken in high school is the most powerful predictor of academic achievement, high school graduation, and enrollment in postsecondary education (Adelman, 1999; Braddock, 1990; Gamoran, 1987; Oakes, 1987). A strong academic program is particularly significant for college enrollment among African American and Latino students (Adelman, 1999). Additionally, research has demonstrated that students who take more intense academic programs in high school attend and persist in higher education at a greater rate than students who take less difficult programs of study (Fry, 2004; Herold, 2003).
http://www.pathwaystocollege.net/pdf/HowisSchoolReform_abridged.pdf

Specifically regarding high school academic preparation, Swail and Williams identify math prowess as essential to matriculation, emphasizing the importance of algebra to success in college, as they state: “Research has determined that mathematics achievement serves as a “gate-keeper” to college

**0.10 How to close it?**—Finally, *how might this achievement gap be closed?* Richard Rothstein speaks simply and succinctly on this issue, as he declares: “Narrowing the achievement gap requires early childhood programs, staffed with professional teachers and nurses, and with curricula that emphasize not only literacy but social and emotional growth. Social class differences in vocabulary and conceptual ability develop by age 3.” (Richard Rothstein, “Reforms That Could Help Narrow the Achievement Gap,” *Policy Perspectives*, WestEd, 2006, p. 5) http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/pp-06-02.pdf

Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley speak in a similar vein, emphasizing “home and family conditions,” as follows:

It’s essential that parents, educators, and policy leaders fully understand that raising student achievement involves much more than improving what goes on in classrooms. Leaders and policy makers must establish community, state, and national programs to both improve schools and enhance the home and family conditions that give all students a better chance to reach high platforms from which to start school. (Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, *The Family: America’s Smallest School*, Educational Testing Service, 2007, p. 41.)


Barton and Coley also comment on the education reform effort in America, addressing both school and non-school factors, in this way:

The nation has set high goals for raising student achievement. Schools play a critical role in this effort, and it is appropriate that a serious national effort is being made to improve them. However, family characteristics and home environment play critical roles as well. Reaching our ambitious national goals will require serious efforts to address issues on both fronts. (Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, *The Family: America’s Smallest School*, Educational Testing Service, 2007, p. 5.)


Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips focus on the topic of early childhood intervention, as they opined:
The critical agenda for early childhood intervention is to advance understanding of what it takes to improve the odds of positive outcomes for the nation’s most vulnerable young children and to determine the most cost-effective strategies for achieving well-defined goals. (Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, Eds., From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000, p. 10.)


Unfortunately, however, the report of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in support of early childhood education offered the following grim forecast:

With current early childhood education resource levels, too many kindergarteners will continue to begin school ill-prepared, language skills and achievement scores in math and reading will likely remain at mediocre levels, costs for interventions during the K–12 years and after will continue to rise, high school graduation rates and postsecondary degree completion rates will likely remain unchanged, and businesses will lack the necessary workforce to fill the jobs of the future. (Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education, U.S. Chamber of Commerce—Institute for a Competitive Workforce, 2010, p. 22.)


0.11 The opportunity gap--Despite this continual media drumbeat today on the achievement gap, some observers, like H. Richard Milner IV, prefer, instead, to stress an “opportunity gap.” As Milner put it in his recent book, “Rather than focus on an achievement gap to explain students’ educational outcomes, I suggest we think about what I call an opportunity gap.” [emphasis in original] Milner explains his reasoning as follows:

. . . I believe a focus on an achievement gap places too much blame and emphasis on students themselves as individuals and not enough attention on why gaps and disparities are commonplace in schools across the country. Opportunity, on the other hand, forces us to think about how systems, processes, and institutions are overtly and covertly designed to maintain the status quo and sustain depressingly complicated disparities in education. (H. Richard Milner IV, Start Where You Are, But Don’t Stay There, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2010, pp. 7-8.)

Like Milner, Linda Darling-Hammond, American Educational Research Association (AERA) past president, recognizes the importance of opportunities—particularly, those possessed by advantaged kids—in learning;
she was quoted, as follows: “The opportunity to learn—the necessary resources, the curriculum opportunities, the quality teachers—that affluent students have, is what determines what people can do in life,’ said Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor of education at Stanford University.” (Sharona Coutts and Jennifer LaFleur, “Some States Still Leave Low-Income Students Behind; Others Make Surprising Gains,” ProPublica, June 30, 2011.)
http://www.propublica.org/article/opportunity-gap-schools-data

Another academic, Gloria Ladson-Billings, University of Wisconsin educational policy professor and former head of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), also took issue with the oft-discussed concept; in her view, “We need to change the discourse from achievement gap to what I call educational debt.” According to a news account, "Instead of telling people to catch up, we need to think about how to pay down the educational debt,’ Ladson-Billings said.” (Dayna Straehley, “U. OF REDLANDS: Speaker debunks achievement gap theories,” The Press-Enterprise, July 12, 2011.)
http://www.pe.com/localnews/stories/PE_News_Local_D_nrace13.3f011e2.html

In her 2011 keynote address “Why Race Still Matters” at the University of Redlands Summer Institute of the Center for Educational Justice, Ladson-Billings referred to the educational debt as “... a combination of historical, moral, sociopolitical and economic factors that have disproportionately affected African-American, Latino, Asian and other non-white students.” (“Center for Educational Justice at University of Redlands Explores Why Race Still Matters and Educational Justice Issues at Summer Institute,” Press Release, University of Redlands, July 13, 2011.)

Five years earlier, in her 2006 Presidential Address to the AERA, Ladson-Billings had likened this educational debt to the national debt, which has accumulated over many years in America. As she declared, “we do not merely have an achievement gap—we have an education debt.” She then implied a reconceptualization of the achievement gap, stating the following:

So we must use our imaginations to construct a set of images that illustrate the debt. The images should remind us that the cumulative effect of poor education, poor housing, poor health care, and poor government services create a bifurcated society that leaves more than its children behind. The images should compel us to deploy our knowledge, skills, and expertise to alleviate the suffering of the least of these. (Gloria Ladson-Billings, “2006 Presidential Address: From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools,” Educational Researcher, Vol. 35, No. 7, p. 10.)
http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/Educational_Researcher/3507/02ERv35n7_Ladson-Billings.pdf

According to Russlynn Ali, assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Education’s office of civil rights, “Fundamental fairness hasn’t reached whole
groups of students.” As she put it regarding information from the 2009-2010 school year released by the Department on June 30, 2011, “For a long time, we have fallen short on why the achievement gap exists,” she said. But the data collected show “gaps in opportunity, in access to courses and other resources that continue to hobble students across the country.” (Nirvi Shah, “Federal Data Shed Light on Education Disparities,” Education Week, July 1, 2011.)

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/07/01/36data.h30.html?tkn=UTYFvt4ELQ0wdXpVjzX%2FQqLiiZTqKFT2xPe&cmp=clp-edweek Per Assistant Secretary Ali, “Transparency is the path to reform, and it’s only through shining a bright spotlight on where opportunity gaps exist that we can really make headway on closing the achievement gap.” (Stacy Teicher Khadaroo, “Civil rights survey: 3,000 US high schools don’t have math beyond Algebra I,” The Christian Science Monitor, June 30, 2011.)


U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan acknowledged disparate opportunities afforded students, as he commented on the new information released: “These data show that far too many students are still not getting access to the kinds of classes, resources and opportunities they need to be successful.” (Nirvi Shah, “Federal Data Shed Light on Education Disparities,” Education Week, July 1, 2011.)

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/07/01/36data.h30.html?tkn=UTYFvt4ELQ0wdXpVjzX%2FQqLiiZTqKFT2xPe&cmp=clp-edweek

Included in the findings on opportunity gaps were the following:

• Some 3,000 schools serving about 500,000 high school students weren’t offering Algebra II classes last school year, and more than 2 million students in 7,300 schools did not offer calculus.

• At schools where the majority of students were African-American, teachers were twice as likely to have only one or two years of experience compared with schools within the same district that had a majority-white student body.

• Less than one-fourth of school districts reported that they ran prekindergarten programs for children from poor families;

• Girls were underrepresented in physics, while boys were underrepresented in Algebra II;

• Just 2 percent of the students with disabilities were taking at least one Advanced Placement class; and

• While students learning English comprised 6 percent of the total high school population, they accounted for 15 percent of the students for whom algebra was the highest-level math course taken by the end of
high school. (Nirvi Shah, “Federal Data Shed Light on Education Disparities,” *Education Week*, July 1, 2011.)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/07/01/36data.h30.html?tkn=UTYFyt4ELQ0wdXpVjzX%2FQqLiifZTyKFT2xPe&cmp=clp-edweek

To make that federal data on the opportunity gap easily searchable, by school and district, ProPublica created a website entitled “The Opportunity Gap: Is Your State Providing Equal Access to Education?” As the website explained:

ProPublica analyzed new data from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights along with other federal education data to examine whether states provide students equal access to programs — such as Advanced Placement or higher-level math and sciences classes — that researchers say will help them later in life. We found that in some states, high-poverty schools are less likely than wealthier schools to have students enrolled those programs. (Jennifer LaFleur, Al Shaw, Sharona Coutts, and Jeff Larson, *ProPublica*, June 30, 2011.)
http://projects.propublica.org/schools/

John H. Jackson, President and CEO of The Schott Foundation for Public Education, stressed the opportunity gap in a 2011 posting on HUFFPOST EDUCATION. As he declared, “We cannot raise student performance and close the achievement gap without first addressing America’s unconscionable and growing opportunity gap.” (John H. Jackson, “U.S. No Longer Leader of the Free World,” HUFFPOST EDUCATION, June 28, 2011.)

Longtime writer on education and advocate for poor children Jonathan Kozol also emphasized the opportunity gap. In an online website for a film on the 1954 *Brown* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, he was quoted as follows regarding what he termed “the so-called achievement gap”:

The so-called achievement gap, in reality, is a grotesque gap in opportunity, and I’m speaking of medical inequalities: unequal access to good pediatric care when children are babies, when they’re infants, when they’re toddlers. I’m speaking of unequal access to preschool education, so these kids enter public school typically two or three years developmentally delayed, behind children of affluent white people in New York City, who typically go to very expensive preschools before they come to public school. And then we’re speaking of gross inequalities in resources, in money spent per child, in salaries paid to teachers, in class size, once they enter public school. Yes, there are all sorts of other factors that influence the low test scores of inner-city children, but the vast majority of factors are matters that society could change if we had the moral will, but we refuse to do so. It doesn’t do any good to simply pass a bill, which involves a lot of exhortation, rhetoric and bombastic utterance about holding children to high standards, holding them
accountable. None of that makes the slightest difference in the world if they’re still in separate and grotesquely unequal social and educational settings. (Jonathan Kozol, With All Deliberate Speed: The Legacy of Brown v Board website.)
http://www.brownvboard.info/popup/22_The.htm

Thomas J. Espenshade, sociology professor at Princeton, and Alexandria Walton Radford, of MPR Associates Inc., commented on what they termed “racial gaps in academic skills and knowledge,” as they stated:

What we see at selective colleges and universities is just the tip of the iceberg. It is symptomatic of a much broader societal phenomenon. Racial gaps in academic skills and knowledge begin to develop soon after birth. They are reflected initially in children’s inventories of vocabulary words and later in tests of math and reading. By the time of kindergarten entry, black children lag about one year behind whites. Gaps continue to grow throughout the elementary and secondary school years in a pattern of cumulative advantage and disadvantage. By 12th grade, black students on average have fallen roughly four years behind whites. Hispanic students perform slightly better than blacks but not nearly at the level of white and Asian students. The likelihood of repeating a grade, lower-track placement in high school, and graduating high school are differentiated by race in the same way. Social class differences account for some of these gaps, but the gaps remain when income and other measures of socioeconomic status are held constant. (Thomas J. Espenshade and Alexandria Walton Radford, “A New Manhattan Project,” Inside Higher Ed, November 12, 2009.)

Espenshade and Radford then proposed the following initiative to confront this issue:

. . . the equivalent of a Manhattan Project for the social and behavioral sciences — a project with the same scale, urgency, and sense of importance as the original Manhattan Project. Its aims should be twofold: (1) to identify the causes and cumulative consequences of racial gaps in academic achievement and (2) to develop concrete steps that can be taken by parents, schools, neighborhoods, and the public sector all working together to close these gaps on a nationwide scale. (Thomas J. Espenshade and Alexandria Walton Radford, “A New Manhattan Project,” Inside Higher Ed, November 12, 2009.)

All of the foregoing have led me to make the appeal in this book’s title: “unstack the odds.” Simply stated, this call recognizes the current reality that all groups of students do not have the same likelihood of accessing college and succeeding there—some have a greater chance, on average, and others have a
lesser chance. For the latter group, the odds are, indeed, stacked against them. As the online announcement for a June 2011 “Achievement Gaps Symposium,” co-sponsored by Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), stated:

Today, many of the 3.5 million Black boys under the age of nine will not enter the pipeline to college and successful adulthood. More than 40 percent of Black children are born into poverty. Poor Black children are behind in cognitive development at nine months and further behind at 24 months. By kindergarten, poor Black children have to beat the odds to catch up -- and as test results show, many never do. (“Media Advisory: ETS Achievement Gaps Symposium to Focus on Young Black Boys: Children’s Defense Fund Presents Best Practices to Change the Odds,” ETS, June 6, 2011.)


Once more, to quote Richard Milner on opportunity gaps:

Research tells us again and again that when students do not achieve, their underachievement is a function of the opportunities that they either have—or have not had. There is no question that opportunity gaps are pervasive in education, and, by opportunity gaps, I mean stark differences in students’ exposure and experiences—their economic resources, the qualifications of their teachers, the rigor of the curricula they study, their teachers’ expectations, and their parents’ involvement in their education. (H. Richard Milner, “Let’s Focus on Gaps in Opportunity, Not Achievement,” Education Week: Commentary, May 6, 2011.)

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/05/06/30milner.h30.html?tkn=TTVFDYUS4eKFJSbv9tMjCubWzTRVdqqB6NS7&cmp=clp-edweek

Ellen Winn, Director of the Education Equality Project, spoke starkly about the odds of certain groups achieving in our society; she stated:

We must first speak honestly about the crisis in public education and acknowledge that eliminating the racial and ethnic education achievement gap is the civil rights issues [sic] of our generation. Fifty-five years after Brown vs. Board of Education, forty years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and twenty-five years after the publication of A Nation at Risk, we must confront the shameful national reality: if you are an African American or Latino child in this country, the probability is high that our public education system will fail you, that you will not graduate from high school, that your ability to function successfully in the twenty-first Century economy will be limited, and that you will have no real prospect of achieving the American dream. (Ellen Winn, response, “How Can We Close The Achievement Gap,” NationalJournal Expert Blogs: Education, August 6, 2009.)
According to writer Sarah D. Sparks, higher education is already using “analytic tools to predict student performance . . . .” Per Sparks, “predictive analytics include an array of statistical methods, such as data mining and modeling, used to identify the factors that predict the likelihood of a specific result.” Now, the urban San Jose (CA) school district is beginning to use predictive analytics for policymaking. In Sparks’ description, the district is modeling high school graduation and college-going trends based on 15 years worth of student academic, behavioral, social development and health data, as well as information on school climate from teachers, parents and students. The district is finalizing a risk-assessment protocol that identifies changing issues that contribute to a student’s risk of dropping out at different grades. (Sarah D. Sparks, “Schools Find Uses for Predictive Data Techniques,” Education Week, June 30, 2011.)

San Jose and other school districts are also participating in a project, in Sparks’ words, “to identify the elements at each school level that predict a student’s understanding of college entrance, readiness for college content, and ability to complete a degree.” (Sarah D. Sparks, “Schools Find Uses for Predictive Data Techniques,” Education Week, June 30, 2011.)

Education historian Diane Ravitch put the issues confronting city schools simply, as she stated: "A large part of the problem in urban school districts has to do with intense poverty and racial isolation. . . . These two factors come together and it's toxic." (Tim Louis Macaluso, “Eye on Education, Part I: City school students,” City Newspaper, June 8, 2011.)

A USA TODAY columnist was critical of urban schools; in his view, “For too many black children, public school systems oppress more than educate. They place students in underachieving, poorly funded schools.” (DeWayne Wickham, “Despite black parent anger in New York City, NAACP is right,” USA TODAY, June 14, 2011.)

Yash Gupta, dean of the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, sent out a warning in June 2011, stating “We should all be terrified. The young people moving through our education system, particularly at public schools in low-income areas, are lamentably unprepared for the challenges that await them in
In the Children’s Defense Fund’s *State of America’s Children 2011*, a similar assessment was noted regarding the academic preparation of minority youth:

Yet nearly 80 percent or more of Black and Hispanic public school students cannot read or do math at grade level in fourth, eighth and 12th grades, sentencing them to social and economic death in this globalizing competitive economy. We must level the playing field and invest in education now so all children can achieve to ensure a solid economic future for all of us and for our nation. (*The State of America’s Children 2011*, Children’s Defense Fund, July 18, 2011 p. ix.)

Some, indeed, believe opportunity gaps can preclude certain students in particular schools from achieving the dream of going to college and graduating. Edwin C. Darden, of the nonprofit Appleseed Foundation, even cautioned against deluding low-income students with this notion. As he stated:

But as a society that reveres success, we should worry about dangling false hopes before students in high-poverty schools. Unless a high-quality education is available to prepare their minds for 21st-century challenges and negate the effects of being poor, the grand vision of a good life is, in reality, just a mirage.

Throughout the United States, school districts that contain a mix of middle-class and high-poverty neighborhoods demonstrate an ‘opportunity gap’ in which wealthier kids possess better resources that lead to better academic outcomes. (Edwin C. Darden, “School Boards Must Prioritize Student Equity,” *Education Week*, May 24, 2011.)

Social Equality Educators, a grassroots organization promoting education in Seattle, held a late May 2011 event called “Achievement Gap or Opportunity Gap? Fighting Racism in Public Schools.” According to a newspaper account, “Speakers addressed whether the gap was about the problems of students achieving or the problems of opportunities given to students.” Identifying structural racism in schools, speakers reportedly said that “. . . these kinds of structures need to be changed if the achievement gap is to be bridged.” They also noted “. . . the problem with trying to measure achievement is that inequality is built into the tests that they provide.” Olga Addae, Seattle Education Association president, was reported as saying “The
achievement gap exists; therefore someone must be to blame.” She was also reported to say “that the out of school and community factors couldn’t be ignored, either.” According to the account, Addae further indicated, “We have to figure out what our shared responsibility is, and that takes every player in the community.” (Christopher Andersson, “Are Minority Kids Being Denied Opportunity Because of Racism in Public Schools,” The Seattle Medium, June 1, 2011.)


As the media keep informing us, attending college today can be expensive—a situation exacerbated, perhaps, because fewer than 30% of high school graduates even knew the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) dealt with financial aid! (Jean Johnson, Jon Rochkind and Amber Ott with Samantha DuPoint and Jeremy Hess, One Degree of Separation: How Young Americans Who Don’t Finish College See Their Chances for Success, Public Agenda, 2011, p. 18.)


Indeed, the cost of college can be another obstacle for students to overcome—and an additional way the odds are stacked against poor kids. As a 2011 report on a survey of high school graduates indicated, “First, One Degree of Separation confirms, as other studies have shown, that most young people without higher education credentials have been economically disadvantaged from the get-go—they typically come from poorer, less well-educated families.” (Jean Johnson, Jon Rochkind and Amber Ott with Samantha DuPoint and Jeremy Hess, One Degree of Separation: How Young Americans Who Don’t Finish College See Their Chances for Success, Public Agenda, 2011, p. 4.)


According to a 2011 post by Annalyn Censky for CNNMoney, “The crux of the problem: Tuition and fees at public universities, according to the College Board, have surged almost 130% over the last 20 years -- while middle class incomes have stagnated.” She quotes financial-aid authority Mark Kantrowitz saying, “As the out-of-pocket costs of a college education go up faster than incomes, it’s pricing low and medium income families out of a college education.” Finally, Censky comments on the loan-debt of today’s college graduates, noting “About two thirds of students graduating with four-year degrees recently did so with loans hanging over their heads, and their average bill comes in at a whopping $23,186, according to FinAid.org.” (Annalyn Censky, “Surging college costs price out middle class,” CNNMoney, June 13, 2011.)


Regarding the cost of college and a resulting opportunity gap for low-income students, a 2011 study of The Education Trust analyzed this issue nationwide. The report’s findings were stark for such young people, as this paragraph indicates:
Across the country, 1,186 four-year colleges and universities in America have comparable data on what low-income students actually pay to attend college. Of these, only five open their doors to a proportion of low-income students that is at or above the national average, provide all of their students with at least a 1-in-2 chance at graduating, and ask low-income students to pay a portion of their family income no greater than what the average middle-income student in the United States pays. Tellingly, none of the well-endowed public flagships, private nonprofits, or for-profit college companies appear in this group. This opportunity gap for low-income students should alarm all Americans, particularly policymakers and institutional leaders seeking to tame budget deficits at the expense of our neediest citizens. (Mamie Lynch, Jennifer Engle, and Jose L. Cruz, *Priced Out: How the Wrong Financial-Aid Policies Hurt Low-Income Students*, The Education Trust, June 2011, p. 1.)


Concluding that study, the authors appealed to those responsible for educational policy to remember the needs—and aspirations—of low-income kids, saying “In a nation founded on principles of fairness, we certainly must do better to provide our neediest students with the opportunities they require for upward economic mobility . . . . We can only hope that, as decision makers work to tame budget deficits, the opportunity deficit in America will weigh as heavily on their minds.” (Mamie Lynch, Jennifer Engle, and Jose L. Cruz, *Priced Out: How the Wrong Financial-Aid Policies Hurt Low-Income Students*, The Education Trust, June 2011, p. 12.)


Further, researcher Marc S. Tucker has linked our system of learning in the U.S. to the broken dreams of some students—who emerge unprepared for the rigors of higher education. As he explained it:

Part of the price paid by the American education system for being built on the mass production model is that we tolerate an exceptionally high rate of wastage. Only in our case, what is being discarded is young people. We see this in the very high percentages of young people who are not fluent readers by the time they leave elementary school, the very high rates at which students drop out of high school, the appalling rates at which those who enroll in college need remedial work when they get there and the equally appalling rate at which they drop out and never receive a degree. (Marc S. Tucker, *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: An American Agenda for Education Reform*, National Center on Education and the Economy, May 24, 2011, p. 38.)


Indeed, according to a newspaper account of data released by the New York State Education Department, many graduates of that state’s high schools were, in fact, not well-prepared for postsecondary study. Per that online
posting, “... only 37 percent of students who entered high school in 2006 left four years later adequately prepared for college, with even smaller percentages of minority graduates and those in the largest cities meeting that standard.” In addition, “a racial achievement gap” was “underscored” by these data: “13 percent of black students and 15 percent of Hispanic students statewide were deemed college-ready after four years of high school, compared with 51 percent of white graduates and 56 percent of Asian-Americans.” (Sharon Otterman, “College-Readiness Low Among State Graduates, Data Show,” The New York Times, June 14, 2011.) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/15/nyregion/37-of-new-york-graduates-meet-college-readiness-standard.html?_r=1&src=rechp

Marc Tucker drew a distinction between America and other, higher-performing nations (among 34) in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whose students have surpassed the achievement of those in the United States. In fact, his research led him to conclude the following: “That does not happen in the countries with the best-performing education systems. These countries have learned how to build quality in beginning before birth and extending throughout the entire education process.” (Marc S. Tucker, Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: An American Agenda for Education Reform, National Center on Education and the Economy, May 24, 2011, p. 38.) http://www.ncee.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Standing-on-the-Shoulders-of-Giants-An-American-Agenda-for-Education-Reform.pdf

The “exceptionally high rate of wastage” of young people Tucker referred to can be quantified—at over 25%—via The Condition of Education 2011, a publication of the U.S. Department of Education. As its editors, Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, pointed out, “Among public high school students in the class of 2007–08, the averaged freshman graduation rate—an estimate of the percentage of an incoming freshman class that graduates with a regular diploma 4 years later—was 74.7 percent.” (Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, editors, The Condition of Education 2011, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2011-034, May 2011, p. 12.) http://www.edweek.org/media/coe-in-brief-final-33condition.pdf


Importantly, as it relates to this book, that “wastage” is higher among certain groups of young people than others in the U.S. An analysis by Christopher B. Swanson of graduation rates in the Class of 2008, the latest year available, indicated the following:
Although the rates for key historically underserved groups have improved over time, they remain a cause for concern. Among Latinos in the class of 2008, 58 percent finished high school with a diploma, while 57 percent of African-Americans and 54 percent of Native Americans graduated. On average, 68 percent of male students earn a diploma compared with 75 percent of female students, a 7-percentage-point gender gap that has remained virtually unchanged for years. High school completion rates for minority males consistently fall near or below the 50 percent mark.

(Christopher B. Swanson, “Analysis Finds Graduation Rates Moving Up: Strong signs of improvement on graduation,” Education Week, May 31, 2011.)

Comparing graduation rates of suburban and urban school districts, Swanson noted differences—with an important caveat, relating to “. . . poverty or racial or socioeconomic segregation”:

Suburban districts graduate considerably more students on average than do those serving urban communities, 76 percent vs. 64 percent. Regardless of location, graduation rates in districts characterized by heightened levels of poverty or racial or socioeconomic segregation fall well below the national average, typically ranging from 58 percent to 63 percent. (Christopher B. Swanson, “Analysis Finds Graduation Rates Moving Up: Strong signs of improvement on graduation,” Education Week, May 31, 2011.)

Regarding segregation in schools, equity advocate Jonathan Kozol had commented in 1991, as follows:

What startled me most—although it puzzles me that I was not prepared for this—was the remarkable degree of racial segregation that persisted almost everywhere. . . . Most of the urban schools I visited were 95 to 99 percent nonwhite. In no school that I saw anywhere in the United States were nonwhite children in large numbers truly intermingled with white children. (Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools, New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991, pp. 2-3.)

In a 2011 interview, Kozol offered this succinct update on school segregation: “. . . Public schools for black and Latino kids from coast to coast are now more wildly and shamefully segregated than in any year since 1968. I walk into high schools, with as many as 3,000 students, from Chicago to Los Angeles, from Dallas to Miami, from Denver to New York, and in an entire day I might see ten white students.” (Anthony Cody, “Confronting the Inequality Juggernaut: A Q&A With Jonathan Kozol,” Education Week—Living in Dialogue, July 18, 2011.)
As for residential segregation of students, an analysis of 2010 Census data by William H. Frey of the Brookings Institution indicated that African-American and Latino children are more likely to live in segregated areas than minority adults are. As he observed: “While the average black lives in a neighborhood where blacks are a plurality, and the average Hispanic lives in a neighborhood where Hispanics are a plurality, these tendencies are more pronounced for children.” (William H. Frey, America’s Diverse Future: Initial Glimpses at the U.S. Child Population from the 2010 Census, State of Metropolitan America--Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, p. 10.)

0.12 Other gaps--Aud and Hannes also commented on high school graduates’ matriculation to higher education--and longstanding “enrollment gaps.” As these editors noted:

The immediate college enrollment rate after high school increased from 1975 to 1997 (51 to 67 percent), declined from 1997 to 2001 (to 62 percent), then increased from 2001 to 2009 (70 percent). Gaps in immediate enrollment rates by family income, race/ethnicity, and sex have persisted over time.

... In every year between 1975 and 2009, the immediate college enrollment rates of high school completers from low- and middle-income families were lower than those of high school completers from high-income families. In 2009, the difference in enrollment rates between students from low- and high-income families was 29 percentage points (55 percent vs. 84 percent). The difference in rates between students from middle- and high-income families was 17 percentage points (67 percent vs. 84 percent).

Differences in enrollment rates by race/ethnicity have also persisted over time. In every year between 2003 and 2009, the immediate college enrollment rate of Asian high school completers was higher than the rates of White, Black, and Hispanic high school completers. In 2009, the immediate college enrollment rate of Asian high school completers (90 percent) was 19 percentage points higher than that of White high school completers (71 percent). These immediate college enrollment rates of White and Asian high school completers were higher than the rates of Black (63 percent) and Hispanic (62 percent) high school completers. (Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, editors, The Condition of Education 2011, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2011-034, May 2011, p. 16.)
In addition to the other gaps already mentioned, there is a gender gap among matriculants to higher education in America today. Put simply, females are now more likely to attend college right after high school graduation than males are. Indeed, according to *The Condition of Education 2011*, “About 54 percent of male and 60 percent of female first-time students who sought a bachelor’s degree and enrolled at a 4-year institution full time in fall 2002 completed a bachelor’s degree at that institution within 6 years.” (Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, editors, *The Condition of Education 2011*, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2011-034, May 2011, p. 18.)


Furthermore, for students who enter college, this gender gap continues, with a higher percentage of females than males graduating—as well as the racial gaps previously noted. Indeed, per Aud and Hannes,

Among students who enrolled in 4-year institutions in fall 2002, Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest 6-year graduation rate (67 percent), followed by Whites (60 percent), Hispanics (49 percent), Blacks (40 percent), and American Indians/Alaska Natives (38 percent). At both public and private not-for-profit 4-year institutions, the 6-year graduation rates for females were higher than the rates for males. (Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, editors, *The Condition of Education 2011*, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2011-034, May 2011, p. 18.)


As for young minority males, a 2011 The College Board report gave these data on both racial and gender completion gaps:

The educational achievement of young men of color demands significant dialogue; currently, just 26 percent of African Americans, 24 percent of Native Americans and Pacific Islanders, and 18 percent of Hispanic Americans have at least an associate degree. In addition, in each racial and ethnic group young women are outperforming young men with respect to the attainment of high school diplomas, with even more pronounced disparities at the postsecondary level. (John Michael Lee Jr. and Tafaya Ransom, *The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress*, CollegeBoard Advocacy & Policy Center, June 2011, p. 7.)


Commenting on that report, The College Board President, Gaston Caperton, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., director of Harvard’s W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, blogged the following:

There is an education crisis facing young men of color. It's not on the front page of the newspaper. People aren't organizing on Facebook or
Twitter. But it's out there, and if we fail to address this crisis together, the education level of the entire American workforce will decline for the first time in our history. (Gaston Caperton and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “The Educational Crisis of Young Men of Color,” HUFFPOST COLLEGE, June 20, 2011.) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gaston-caperton/the-educational-crisis-of_b_877716.html?ir=College

0.13 Reform--These gaps—and other issues—have led today to calls for reform of the U.S. education system. As Christopher B. Swanson stated in his analysis of the nation’s high school graduation rates,

At the heart of the reform agenda lie commitments to combat the U.S. dropout crisis and propel the nation’s schools and its economy at full speed into the 21st century, by ensuring that all students have a chance to earn a meaningful diploma that prepares them for further education and training and a successful adult life. The administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama have espoused such goals, as have major philanthropies, leading nonprofit organizations, prominent business leaders, and state and district policymakers from coast to coast. (Christopher B. Swanson, “Analysis Finds Graduation Rates Moving Up: Strong signs of improvement on graduation,” Education Week, May 31, 2011.) http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/06/09/34analysis.h30.html?tkn=YSUFAEYy17FNR14oOWD1RiiOioMCNeg6Y3&cmp=clp-edweek&intc=EW-DC11-EWH

Seeming inability to close the achievement gap has fueled discussion between those favoring “school-centered” approaches and others endorsing “community-focused” initiatives. Harvard’s Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr. summarized these sides of the debate as follows:

The lack of progress has fed into a long-standing and rancorous debate among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners as to whether schools alone can close the achievement gap or whether the challenges children bring to school are too much for even the best educators to overcome. Proponents of the school-centered approach refer to anecdotes of excellence in particular schools or examples of other countries where poor children in superior schools outperform average Americans (Karin Chenoweth, 2007). Advocates of the community-focused approach argue that teachers and school administrators are dealing with issues that originate outside the classroom, citing research that shows racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps are present before children enter school (Fryer and Levitt 2004; 2006) and that one-third to one-half of the gap can be explained by family-environment indicators (Meredith Phillips, James Crouse, and John Ralph 1998; Fryer and Levitt 2004). In this scenario, combating poverty and having more constructive out-of-school time may lead to better and more-focused instruction in school. Indeed, James Coleman et al. (1966), in their famous report on equality of
educational opportunity, argue that schools alone cannot treat the problem of chronic underachievement in urban schools. (Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr., “Are High-Quality Schools Enough to Increase Achievement Among the Poor?” November 2010, pp. 1-2.)
http://www.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/fryer/files/HCZ_Nov_2010.pdf

Paul Tough, contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine, succinctly stated the challenge involved: “... Successfully educating large numbers of low-income kids is very, very hard. But it is not impossible, as reformers have repeatedly demonstrated on a small scale. To achieve systemwide success, though, we need a shift in strategy.” (Paul Tough, “No, Seriously: No Excuses,” The New York Times, July 7, 2011.)

As for reform, Tough addressed what he thinks reformers should be doing; the writer stated:

Reformers also need to take concrete steps to address the whole range of factors that hold poor students back. That doesn’t mean sitting around hoping for utopian social change. It means supplementing classroom strategies with targeted, evidence-based interventions outside the classroom: working intensively with the most disadvantaged families to improve home environments for young children; providing high-quality early-childhood education to children from the neediest families; and, once school begins, providing low-income students with a robust system of emotional and psychological support, as well as academic support. (Paul Tough, “No, Seriously: No Excuses,” The New York Times, July 7, 2011.)

Reform solutions have been offered representing positions that span both the political and economic spectrums. The divisions between Republicans and Democrats on policy issues relating to education reform are frequently discussed in online media. For example, blogging in Education Week, Sean Cavanagh commented on the words used in the current debate over education reform, saying this:

The current lexicon groups one set of policies—which generally includes support for charter schools, tougher standards and testing, evaluating and paying teachers based on performance, and challenges to teachers’ unions on traditional job protections—under the favorable heading of reform. Resistance to those ideas is often branded as misguided at best, and obstructionist at worst. (Sean Cavanagh, “In War of Words, ‘Reform’ a Potent Weapon,” Education Week, March 1, 2011.)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/03/02/22rhetoric_ep.h30.html
Despite the intensity of this debate, however, no consensus exists on what steps will, in President Obama’s words quoted earlier, “win the race to educate our kids.” Specifically, agreement on the best ways to close these gaps in the U.S. has not yet emerged—if it ever will. Nonetheless, a 2011 study analyzing the education systems of those nations ahead of America in international rankings found little evidence that frequently-proposed reform solutions had been utilized abroad. Indeed, according to researcher Marc S. Tucker,

It turns out that neither the researchers whose work is reported on in this paper nor the analysts of the OECD PISA data have found any evidence that any country that leads the world’s education performance league tables has gotten there by implementing any of the major agenda items that dominate the education reform agenda in the United States.

We include in this list the use of market mechanisms such as charter schools and vouchers, the identification and support of education entrepreneurs to disrupt the system, and the use of student performance data on standardized tests to identify teachers and principals who are then rewarded on that basis for the value they add to a student’s education or who are punished because they fail to do so.

This is not to say that none of these initiatives will lead to significantly improved performance at scale. It is only to say that none of the countries that have the best records of performance have employed these strategies to get there. (Marc S. Tucker, *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: An American Agenda for Education Reform*, National Center on Education and the Economy, May 24, 2011, pp. 39-40.)

Diane Ravitch of NYU also weighed in on certain policy proposals—including those characterized as “market-based”—when she recently wrote:

Educators know that 100 percent proficiency is impossible, given the enormous variation among students and the impact of family income on academic performance. Nevertheless, some politicians believe that the right combination of incentives and punishments will produce dramatic improvement. Anyone who objects to this utopian mandate, they maintain, is just making an excuse for low expectations and bad teachers. (Diane Ravitch, “Waiting for a School Miracle,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 2011.)

Indiana University education professors Jonathan Plucker and David Rutkowski opined candidly on education reforms and their effects on student achievement, writing in a posting on *Education Week*:
As would be expected, many of these reforms have been touted as the silver bullets that will result in major improvements in American education. However, the dirty little secret among researchers is that these reforms will almost certainly have little to no effect on the performance of most students.

Volumes of nonpartisan research over the past 20 years suggest that most reforms (e.g., vouchers, charters, merit pay) have marginal effects on student achievement. Reforms that show benefits usually produce effects that are so small they call into question the enormous resource and opportunity costs of the interventions. Put simply, most education reforms are not effective, and those that show even a sliver of potential are very inefficient. (Jonathan Plucker and David Rutkowski, “Running a Race Against Ourselves: Inefficient, ineffective education policy reforms rule the day,” Education Week, July 5, 2011.)


Nonprofit organizations advocating for increased access and success often refer back to the American ideal for education; Appleseed Foundation is one such entity. Appleseed’s views were expressed in its 2011 report:

For Appleseed, it comes down to fairness. The essential mission of a public education is to provide every child, regardless of background, with a chance to reach his or her full potential. Horace Mann, an early advocate for our modern system of free, widely available public schools, said, ‘Education . . . beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of conditions of men -- the balance wheel of the social machinery . . . It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich; it prevents being poor.’

Our goal is to spark systematic changes so that children in poverty can routinely leap high above their starting circumstances. (The Same Starting Line: How School Boards Can Erase the Opportunity Gap Between Poor and Middle-Class Children,” Appleseed, January 2011, p. 7.)

http://www.appleseednetwork.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=u7mSqlnjLk%3D&tabid=157

Appleseed Foundation’s comparison of the American education ideal with its reality noted discrepancies. As its study of the opportunity gap indicated: “The fundamental problem of disparate educational outcomes continues to mar America’s promise as a land of opportunity. Appleseed has found inequities in resource allocations within school districts as an oft-hidden component contributing to this problem.” (The Same Starting Line: How School Boards Can Erase the Opportunity Gap Between Poor and Middle-Class Children,” Appleseed, January 2011, p. 32.)

http://www.appleseednetwork.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=u7mSqln-jLk%3D&tabid=157
IU’s Plucher and Rutkowski’s views elucidate discrepancies between the American ideal in education—and realities for many students—as they pertain to international test comparisons. As they stated:

A close look at international test data, including the last round of scores from the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, helps us understand why we aren’t making progress: The United States unquestionably has one of the very best and very worst performing school systems.

That’s not a typo. For example, the U.S. average on PISA in reading was 500, a rather mediocre showing that ranks us about 15th (similar to Iceland and several other European countries). But Asian-Americans scored a world-class 541 (second only to Shanghai, on par with South Korea and Finland), and Caucasians averaged an impressive 525 (on par with Singapore and Canada in the middle of the top 10). Not too shabby!

Hispanic Americans, however, scored a well-below-average 466 (similar to Lithuania and Turkey, ranked 40th and 41st, respectively), and African-Americans averaged 441 (similar to 45th-ranked Serbia and just ahead of 46th-place Bulgaria). Breaking out the scores by poverty level would tell a similar story: American ‘haves’ are among the best-achieving students in the world, but the ‘have nots’ perform at shockingly low levels. (Jonathan Plucker and David Rutkowski, “Running a Race Against Ourselves: Inefficient, ineffective education policy reforms rule the day,” Education Week, July 5, 2011.)

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/07/05/36plucker.h30.html?tkn=NOWOFDmAY9TjVnTqUHvlcpb4fgdSnOyuXNFCQ&cmp=clp-edweek

**0.14 Racism**—A real hazard in discussing gaps in regard to education in America is to approach a “third rail” in America—the old-fashioned racism of those who wrongly implied that students’ race determined their achievement in school. Barton and Coley had commented simply on this caustic misconception, saying “Yet we know that skin color does not determine student achievement.” (Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, Parsing the Achievement Gap II, Educational Testing Service, Policy Information Report, April 2009, p. 6.)

http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf

According to Jason Kamras, National Teacher of the Year in 2005, “Some individuals in this country still believe that the achievement gap exists because children of certain backgrounds — namely, low-income or minority children — are inherently less capable than others. Nothing could be more false.” (Dwight Lewis, “Racial gap hinders academic progress,” The Tennessean, July 22, 2011.)

http://www.tennessean.com/article/20110724/OPINION01/307240040/Racial-gap-hinders-academic-progress
Similarly, Anya Kamenetz, blogging in *The Huffington Post*, dismissed this long-debunked, racist notion matter-of-factly, as she stated:

. . . I have to believe that the large racial and economic gaps that persist in our educational system are the result of systematic inequality, not differences in innate ability. Therefore it follows that a massive injustice is being perpetuated on thousands of children who get crappy instruction in crappy schools and never get a decent chance to go to college, even though if you had stuck them in a top-flight public school from 1st grade they’d definitely be Ivy League material. (Anya Kamenetz, “DIY U, Educational Access, and the New Elitism,” *HUFFPOST COLLEGE*, October 25, 2010.) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anya-kamenetz/diy-u-educational-access_b_773239.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anya-kamenetz/diy-u-educational-access_b_773239.html)


Nora Lehnhoff discussed an underprivileged student, Andrea, in her social environment to provide a broader context for evaluating education reform proposals today. As Lehnhoff stated:

Students like Andrea who come from homes where substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, food shortages and parental neglect are common are not going to benefit from school reform if it’s developed in a vacuum. These are societal, not educational, problems. If state, federal and local school agencies truly want to close the achievement gap, reduce the dropout rate and improve student performance, they need to think outside the classroom box. (Nora Lehnhoff, “Why education reforms don’t succeed,” *OregonLive.com*, May 7, 2011.) [http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2011/05/why_education_reform_s_dont_suc.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2011/05/why_education_reform_s_dont_suc.html)

Sadly, such young children can perceive the difficulty of their situation. A newspaper article about a mentoring program for elementary school students in Chicago indicated that “Geraod does not need research to know that the odds are against him.” As the young boy said, “If you just sit on the corner all the time, you’re going to end up dead or in jail,” he said. “A black man’s life is the hardest life.” (Rebecca Vevea, “Mentoring Program Focuses on Role Models for Boys,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 2011.) [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/03/us/03cncpeace.html?_r=1&hpw](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/03/us/03cncpeace.html?_r=1&hpw)
Which is not to say that individual students can’t overcome obstacles. Indeed, two seniors of approximately 200 Class of 2011 graduates from Youngstown (OH) East High School, served by our Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP), were described in a newspaper article thus:

Cametreus Clardy’s father was murdered when he was 3 — a victim of drug violence.

His mother raised Cametreus, 17, and his siblings alone. Four years ago, the family lost its home and moved in with Cametreus’s grandmother.

Miya Merchant, 18, watched her mother battle asthma for years before it killed her in April 2010.

Miya moved in with her aunt and uncle. Two of her siblings are with her father, and the family’s youngest lives in Pennsylvania.

But the two members of the East High School Class of 2011 didn’t allow past troubles to determine their futures.

“I refused to be one of those people who said, ‘I could have been,’” Cametreus said.

Even after the death, Miya keeps her mother in mind whenever she has a choice to make.


Both students, it is important to note, plan to matriculate. According to reporter Denise Dick’s article, “Cametreus earned a full-tuition scholarship to The Ohio State University through the Young Scholars Program. He plans to be a marine biologist.” As for the young woman, Dick said “Miya wants to be a teacher and will study education at Youngstown State University. She also joined the Air Force Reserves.” (Denise Dick, “East High grads overcome adversity,” The Vindicator, June 3, 2011.) http://www.vindy.com/news/2011/jun/03/struggle-to-success/

At Boardman (OH) High School, also served by our MVCAP, a local newspaper article entitled “Survivor succeeds” described another graduate from the Class of 2011 overcoming obstacles; according to the reporter’s account:

Shavai D. Owens proudly walked across the stage to receive her diploma—even though just four short months ago, it appeared she might never walk again.
. . . Exactly four months ago, Owens, 18, was in critical condition fighting for her life after having been shot in the head during a Feb. 6 shooting at an Indiana Avenue residence near Youngstown State University.

Jamail Johnson, 25, a YSU senior and fraternity member, was killed in the shooting. Eleven others, including Owens, were wounded.

This summer, Owens, who had an eye socket replaced last month, will be looking forward to attending YSU, where she plans to declare a double major in pre-law and psychology.” (Sean Barron, “Survivor succeeds, The Vindicator, June 6, 2011, p. A1.)


Insofar as closing gaps, there is much debate today, in locations across the country—subscribe to a Google Alert on “achievement gap” and count the daily articles--over the most effective approaches. Many proposals seem to be focused narrowly—some might say, exclusively--on school-based and classroom emphases; included among these might be a “no excuses” premise, rigid accountability for teachers, and high expectations for students. Other options posit a broader approach, emphasizing both in-school and other factors. Linda Darling-Hammond, professor of education at Stanford University, seems to espouse this latter perspective in her post from 2009, as she stated:

We have trouble in this country maintaining focus and commitment to closing the educational opportunity gap. For decades now, the education community has sought to ‘solve’ the achievement gap. In that time, we have learned one important fact. We cannot address issues of inequity and lack of access by simply doing the same things harder. If we are to provide a truly equal, high-quality education to all students – the only true long-term solution to the achievement gap – we must start by acknowledging the inequalities in the system we currently operate, and we must focus on providing all students with well-trained, effective educators and all educators with the training, support, and resources necessary to lead today’s classrooms. (Linda Darling-Hammond, response, “How Can We Close The Achievement Gap,” NationalJournal Expert Blogs: Education, August 6, 2009.)


0.15 Poverty--again--Among the major issues, of course, in closing the achievement gap is poverty. Some might say it is the only issue. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips framed this factor, emphasizing its importance in a child’s first years of life, in the following manner:

Young children are the poorest members of society and are more
likely to be poor today than they were 25 years ago. Growing up in poverty greatly increases the probability that a child will be exposed to environments and experiences that impose significant burdens on his or her wellbeing, thereby shifting the odds toward more adverse developmental outcomes. Poverty during the early childhood period may be more damaging than poverty experienced at later ages, particularly with respect to eventual academic attainment. The dual risk of poverty experienced simultaneously in the family and in the surrounding neighborhood, which affects minority children to a much greater extent than other children, increases young children’s vulnerability to adverse consequences. (Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, Eds., From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000, p. 9.)

Massachusetts secretary of education S. Paul Reville wrote about “the Poverty Gap” in a recent post. As he related poverty to school reform:

- **We readily recognize the consistent, ironclad law of association between poverty and educational achievement and attainment.** However, we persist in school reform strategies that, despite success at the margins, regularly fail to address the factors associated with poverty that, on average, tend to impede student learning. While the past decade-plus of school reform has seen a necessary and laudable increase in emphasis on the need to improve curriculum and instruction for all students, we continue, for the most part, to look the other way when it comes to addressing out of school factors which get in the way of students benefitting from optimized curriculum and instruction. (Paul Reville, “Closing the Poverty Gap: The Way Forward for Education Reform,” Education Week: The Futures of School Reform, May 23, 2011.)

Further, Reville linked himself to those advocating going beyond school-based factors to combat the effects of poverty, stating “It is now blatantly apparent to me and other education activists, ranging from Geoffrey Canada to Richard Rothstein to Linda Darling-Hammond, that the strategy of instructional improvement will not, on average, enable us to overcome the barriers to student learning posed by the conditions of poverty.” Rather, Reville advocated a more comprehensive strategy; he stated:

- As others have argued, we need "a broader, bolder" approach, one that meets every child where he or she is and gives to each one the quality and quantity of support and instruction needed to attain the standards. Those of us who have the privileges of affluence know how to do this at
scale with our children. We wrap services and supports around these children from the pre-natal period through their twenties. We know how to do it, but do we have the will to do it for "other people's children"? And do we know how to institutionalize the necessary services and supports that are best provided through families?” (Paul Reville, “Closing the Poverty Gap: The Way Forward for Education Reform,” Education Week: The Futures of School Reform, May 23, 2011.)


Blogging for her regular column in The Washington Post, Valerie Strauss struck a similar chord regarding the importance of poverty and out-of-school factors related to student achievement, as she stated:

In the current climate, anybody who raises the issue of how poverty affects students runs the risk of being labeled as:

*a defender of the status quo

*someone who uses poverty as an excuse for bad teachers who are protected by bad teachers unions

*someone who believes that certain kids cannot learn as well as other kids.

None of those are true.

Authentic reform must include addressing the very real health and emotional and social issues that kids bring with them to school every day, often getting in the way of their ability to focus on geometry, read and analyze a novel or take a standardized test. Canada knows this.

Pretending poverty doesn’t matter doesn’t mean it doesn’t matter.

Extending the school day, and making kids take more standardized tests, and making sure that kids in California and Maine are taught to the same common standards won't help kids who are hungry and sick and need glasses and don’t feel that their school environment is safe. Reformers who ignore such pesky details can’t succeed. (Valerie Strauss, “Missing the point on poverty and reform—again,” The Washington Post: The Answer Sheet, May 20, 2011.)


Susan P. Neuman, George W. Bush’s Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education from 2002-2004, commented on the relationship between schools and poor children. As she opined:

Rather, schools will fail to significantly close the gap because so many children come from highly vulnerable and dysfunctional environments before they ever reach the schoolhouse doors. Despite America’s vast wealth, nearly one out of every five American children lives in poverty—
one of the highest poverty rates in the developed world. The painful fact is that, despite the billions of dollars poured into schools and the vast array of reforms implemented, whatever influences a school has on its students’ lives is trumped by this reality. Today, despite the past 40 years of reform, we have done almost nothing to raise or change the trajectory of our poor and disadvantaged children. (Susan P. Neuman, Changing the Odds for Children at Risk: Seven Essential Principles of Programs that Break the Cycle of Poverty, New York: Teachers College Press, 2009, p. ix.)

In Neuman’s view, it appears that schools play a role, but not the only role in educating poor children; in her words, “Good schools can go a long way toward helping poor children achieve better, but the fact remains that educational inequity is rooted in economic problems and social pathologies too deep to be overcome by school alone.” (Susan P. Neuman, Changing the Odds for Children at Risk: Seven Essential Principles of Programs that Break the Cycle of Poverty, New York: Teachers College Press, 2009, p. ix.)

Helen Janc Malone, from the Futures of School Reform effort at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, also seems to indicate that school-based solutions, by themselves, may be found wanting in overcoming educational effects of poverty—but more comprehensive approaches have yet to emerge or be incorporated into government programs. In her words:

A popular phrase coined a few years back, "schools can't do it alone," suggests that we, as a society, place too high of a burden on our schools to both alleviate all the negative influences that play a role in student learning, such as those associated with poverty, and, at the same time, prepare every student to access and graduate from college. For schools feeling pressure to "do it all," having community partners that offer learning opportunities, provide enrichment activities, and engage children and youth in positive developmental experiences seems appealing; however, school-community partnerships continue to be sporadic, and the government response to include out-of-school time programs into the education fold continues to be largely haphazard and reactive. (Helen Janc Malone, Prove It! Education Week: The Futures of School Reform, May 25, 2011.)
The obstacle of poverty to students’ graduation from high school and matriculation to higher education has also been noted by the nonprofit organization Appleseed Foundation. According to its 2011 report,

We know from research that poverty often sabotages student success. The May 2010 *Conditions of Education* publication, compiled annually by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center on Education Statistics, concluded that 91 percent of students from low-poverty schools graduated with a diploma in 2007 compared to 68 percent of students from high-poverty schools. In addition, enrollment in a 4-year college immediately following high school graduation was 52 percent for low-poverty schools contrasted with 28 percent for high-poverty schools. (*The Same Starting Line: How School Boards Can Erase the Opportunity Gap Between Poor and Middle-Class Children,* Appleseed, January 2011, p. 12.)

http://www.appleseednetwork.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=u7mSqlnjLk%3D&tabid=157

And we know which groups of students are more likely to attend high-poverty schools: those that already have the odds stacked against their access and success. David Berliner, professor emeritus of education at Arizona State University, presented these data, as follows:

. . . In 2006-07 the average white student attended a school in which about 30% of the students were low-income. But the average black or Hispanic student was in a school where nearly 60% of the students were classified as low-income; similarly, the average American Indian was in a school where more than half the students were poor.

Overall, fewer than 4% of white students and less than a tenth of Asian students—in contrast to 40% of black and Latino students—attend schools where 70-100% of the children are poor. These schools are often dominated by the many dimensions of intense, concentrated, and isolated poverty that shapes the lives of students and families. While most whites and almost half of Asians attend schools with 0-30% poor students, that is true for only one-sixth of blacks and one-fifth of Latinos. (David C. Berliner, *Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success*, Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC), March 2009, pp. 7-8.)

http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/PB-Berliner-NON-SCHOOL.pdf

According to a 2011 post by teacher and administrator Deborah Meier, who blogs in *Education Week*, “We have a heritage of disrespect for the poor. Either they don’t know what they’re doing or they deserve what they get. (While we insist on bragging about our rags-to-riches family histories to prove the latter.)” (Deborah Meier, “A Heritage of Disrespect?” *Education Week: Bridging Differences*, May 26, 2011.)

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences/poverty/
In a discussion on public radio with Wendy Kopp and Tavis Smiley, Princeton professor Cornell West commented—regarding the movie *Waiting for Superman*—on the situation of poor kids, as follows:

At the same time when I think of the movie I think of the degree to which we still put such low value on the lives and the opportunities for poor and working class kids of all colors, disproportionately black, brown and red. . . .

In that sense it’s a matter of having priorities and values in place such that you really believe that every child has the same weight value and the same sanctity and dignity. So I think of the system that you’re trying to change. It’s a moral disgrace when you look at the schools in our urban areas. Not just black, but brown and white poor and so forth. (“Smiley & West featuring Wendy Kopp,” *Smiley & West Show Transcripts*, January 21, 2011.) [http://www.smileyandwest.com/transcripts/?p=65](http://www.smileyandwest.com/transcripts/?p=65)

As for access and success, it is important to note which groups of students are educated in high-poverty schools. According to *The Condition of Education 2011*, students from underrepresented minorities tend to attend such schools. As that report indicated:

In 2008–09, greater percentages of Hispanic, Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native students attended high-poverty public elementary and secondary schools than did White or Asian/Pacific Islander students. In addition, greater percentages of Asian/Pacific Islander students attended these schools than did White students. For example, at the elementary level, 45 percent of Hispanic, 44 percent of Black, and 31 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students were enrolled in high-poverty schools, compared with 17 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander and 6 percent of White students. (Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, editors, *The Condition of Education 2011*, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2011-034, May 2011, p. 20.) [http://www.edweek.org/media/coe-in-brief-final-33condition.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/coe-in-brief-final-33condition.pdf)

Some have called for a new system of education in America, one that will better prepare low-income—and other—students, now and in the future. Among these observers is Massachusetts education secretary Paul Reville. In his view:

One thing is certain: if we want to achieve the goal of preparing all of our students for success then we will need a twenty-first century school system designed to do a very different job that our current education system was designed to do early in the last century. We are no longer batch-processing, mass-producing education for children to enter a low skill, low knowledge economy. We now need to educate all of our children to succeed in a high skill, high knowledge, post-industrial economy. We will need a system that starts in the earliest years of childhood,
differentiates between children and meets their widely varying needs, a
system that provides academic stimulation and engaging challenges year
round while simultaneously guaranteeing that students have access to a
robust platform of health and human service supports that will enable
them to attend school and other educational opportunities regularly
while supplying their best effort to meeting their learning challenges.
(Paul Reville, “Closing the Poverty Gap: The Way Forward for Education Reform,”
*Education Week: The Futures of School Reform*, May 23, 2011.)
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/futures_of_reform/2011/05/closing_the_pover-
ty_gap_the_way_forward_for_education_reform.html

Reville elaborated on his conception of this “twenty-first century school
system,” relating his view of reform to factors beyond the classroom and school
house walls. As he stated:

Our vision of the future of education reform is simple: American schools
won’t achieve their goal of “all students at proficiency” unless they attend
to nonschool factors. Though the nation is now in partial denial about
this, we project that this will change—not because of sudden prosperity
and deep public-sector pockets, nor because of a broad shift in public
sentiment that activates new moral commitments to the ideal of
educating other people’s children, but as an outgrowth of the same hard-
nosed, pragmatic, evidence-based orientation that for the moment is
supporting the unlikely claim that schools can do it alone. (Jeffrey R.
Henig and S. Paul Reville, “Why Attention Will Return to Non-School Factors,”
*Education Week: The Futures of School Reform*, May 23, 2011.)
WFtPoVpeticSzXNAVRq7rOekzSASxcFCKT&cmp=clp-edweek

In their 2009 update for Educational Testing Service (ETS), Paul Barton
and Richard Coley had discussed factors affecting student achievement; as
they stated:

Syntheses of many research studies establish that 16 factors related to
life experiences and conditions are correlated with cognitive development
and academic achievement. This report asks whether there are
differences in these 16 ‘correlates of achievement’ among different
population groups that mirror the large and persistent gaps that are
found in school achievement. The answer is yes, there are differences
in these correlates of achievement among racial/ethnic and income
groups, and those differences do mirror the achievement gaps. The
unavoidable conclusion is that if we are to close the gaps in achievement,
we must first close the gaps in these life experiences and conditions.
(Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, *Parsing the Achievement Gap II*,
Educational Testing Service, Policy Information Report, April 2009, p. 3.)
http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICPARSINGII.pdf

Others have also emphasized the importance of “nonschool factors,”
relating them to closing achievement gaps for low-income kids and school-
based reform. Signers of the Broader, Bolder Approach to Education statement endorsed these views:

Evidence demonstrates, however, that achievement gaps based on socioeconomic status are present before children even begin formal schooling. Despite impressive academic gains registered by some schools serving disadvantaged students, there is no evidence that school improvement strategies by themselves can substantially, consistently, and sustainably close these gaps.

Nevertheless, there is solid evidence that policies aimed directly at education-related social and economic disadvantages can improve school performance and student achievement. The persistent failure of policymakers to act on that evidence — in tandem with a school improvement agenda — is a major reason why the association between disadvantage and low student achievement remains so strong. (A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education: The Challenge, June 10, 2008.) http://www.boldapproach.org/statement

Jessica R. Wolff expressed this view regarding poor kids and what she termed “comprehensive educational opportunity,” the name of a project she directs at Columbia University’s Teachers College, as she wrote the following:

Research clearly shows that for disadvantaged children to obtain a meaningful educational opportunity, they need both important school-based resources like quality teaching, and critical out-of-school resources like quality early learning experiences, physical and mental health care, after-school and summer programs, and family engagement—what we call ‘comprehensive educational opportunity.’ (Jessica R. Wolff, letter to the editor on “Can Teaching Overcome Poverty’s Ills,” The New York Times, April 30, 2011, p. A18.)
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/30/opinion/l30nocera.html?_r=1&amp;

Educational psychologist David Berliner summarized out-of-school factors (OSF) that affect students’ health and learning opportunities in a 2009 EPIC report, as follows:

The U.S. has set as a national goal the narrowing of the achievement gap between lower income and middle-class students, and that between racial and ethnic groups. This is a key purpose of the No Child Left Behind act, which relies primarily on assessment to promote changes within schools to accomplish that goal. However, out-of-school factors (OSFs) play a powerful role in generating existing achievement gaps, and if these factors are not attended to with equal vigor, our national aspirations will be thwarted.

This brief details six OSFs common among the poor that significantly affect the health and learning opportunities of children, and accordingly
limit what schools can accomplish on their own: (1) low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children; (2) inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often a result of inadequate or no medical insurance; (3) food insecurity; (4) environmental pollutants; (5) family relations and family stress; and (6) neighborhood characteristics. These OSFs are related to a host of poverty-induced physical, sociological, and psychological problems that children often bring to school, ranging from neurological damage and attention disorders to excessive absenteeism, linguistic underdevelopment, and oppositional behavior.

Also discussed is a seventh OSF, extended learning opportunities, such as preschool, after school, and summer school programs that can help to mitigate some of the harm caused by the first six factors. (David C. Berliner, Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success, Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC), March 2009, p. 1.)

Berliner was unambiguous in his view regarding ways to close the achievement gap and OSFs, as he stated:

In fact, it is the position taken here that we can never reduce the achievement gap between poor and non-poor children, between African American and white children, or between Hispanic and Anglo children, unless OSFs that positively or negatively affect achievement are more equitably distributed. In the U.S. today, too many OSFs are strongly correlated with class, race, and ethnicity, and too many children are in schools segregated by those very same characteristics. (David C. Berliner, Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success, Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC), March 2009, p. 7.)

The president of elite Wesleyan University, Michael S. Roth, also commented on the opportunities of low-income kids versus those of more well-off students in American schools. As President Roth put it:

Today, many schools deprive students of those opportunities by failing to teach them basic skills and by isolating them from people from walks of life different from their own. The American education system functions to ensure that poor kids will have ever-reduced chances for changing their economic conditions. Wealthier students in more highly performing schools, by contrast, will be able to expand the social networks already available to them. (Michael S. Roth, “How Colleges Can Ensure Quality, Not Inequality,” The Chronicle of Higher Education: Commentary, April 24, 2011.)

**0.16 Latinos**—President Obama focused on kids who are often poor—Hispanics—in remarks he made at the 2010 signing of an executive order
renewing an initiative on educational excellence for this group, as he noted the following:

Today, Latinos make up the largest minority group in America’s schools—more than one in five students overall—and they face challenges of monumental proportions. Latino students are more likely to attend our lowest-performing schools, more likely to learn in larger class sizes, more likely to drop out at higher rates. Fewer than half take part in early childhood education. Only about half graduate on time from high school. And those who do make it to college often find themselves underprepared for its rigors. (Remarks by the President at the signing of Executive Order 13555 renewing the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, Oct. 19, 2010, in Winning the Future: Improving Education For The Latino Community, U.S. Department of Education, April 2011, p. 20.)
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/WinningTheFutureImprovingLatinoEducation.pdf

Andrew J. Rotherham— who blogs at Eduwonk, co-founded the nonprofit Bellwether Education for low-income students, was a National Alliance for Public Charter Schools’ founding board member, and posts a Thursday column on education for Time.com— addressed opportunities for Hispanics. As Rotherham stated:

We hear a lot of talk from our national leaders about how our schools must do better to keep the country economically competitive. Given the numbers, doing a better job with Hispanic students is a key part of any competitiveness strategy. In fact, if we’re serious about producing many more scientists, engineers, and innovators than we do today, currently underserved populations are the obvious place to look. More fundamentally—given our national creed—if we want to do more than pay lip service to diversity and opportunity for all, this is a vital place to start. (Andrew J. Rotherham, “Why the Hispanic Student Crisis Is Going Ignored,” Time, May 12, 2011.)
http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2070930,00.html

According to Rotherham, the educational gap for Latinos is important not only to that group, but also to the future of American society:

These two tectonic issues—our rocketing Hispanic population and the inadequate education of Hispanic students—are on a collision course that could either end in disaster or in another story of successful assimilation in America. The stakes are clear: How we meet this challenge will impact our politics, economy, and our society itself. (Andrew J. Rotherham, “Why the Hispanic Student Crisis Is Going Ignored,” Time, May 12, 2011.)
http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2070930,00.html
As for the population of Hispanics in the U.S., an article on the CNN website regarding an analysis of 2010 Census data by William Frey underscored Rotherham’s observation; it stated:

For the first time in national history, the majority of young people in two states -- California and New Mexico -- now identify as Hispanic, according to census data released this year.

In eight additional states -- Nevada, Arizona, Texas, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, Maryland and Hawaii -- white children are in the minority compared with peers from other racial and ethnic groups combined, according to data analyzed by William Frey at the Brookings Institution.

The number of white children in the United States actually shrank by 4.3 million kids from 2000 to 2010, according to the analysis.

Meanwhile, the number of Hispanic and Asian children grew by a total of 5.5 million. Hispanics made up the bulk of this growth. (John D. Sutter, “The changing face of America’s youth,” CNN, July 6, 2011.)

Frey’s report alluded to the education of young Latinos, observing that “From a social and human capital perspective, larger new minority youth populations, many of whom are first- and second-generation immigrants, also pose new challenges for public education and human services to be addressed in the decades ahead, especially in light of minorities’ traditionally lower levels of educational attainment.” (William H. Frey, America’s Diverse Future: Initial Glimpses at the U.S. Child Population from the 2010 Census, State of Metropolitan America--Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, p. 11.)

Some link the education issues faced by Latinos to their early childhood; indeed, in the view of Bruce Fuller and Anthony Y. Kim, both from the University of California, Berkeley, “Until Latino children gain equal access to preschools that display robust quality it’s difficult to see how early achievement gaps can be narrowed, or how educators can stem the alienating effects of schooling felt by many children and youths.” (Bruce Fuller and Anthony Y. Kim, “Latino Access to Preschool Stalls after Earlier Gains: Certain to harden achievement gaps, erode workforce quality,” New Journalism on Latino Children, University of California Berkeley, April 2011, unpaged.)

There is recognition among Latino youth that college is important—and emphasis by their parents to attend. However, when it comes to an expectation that they will matriculate and actual enrollment, percentages fall off—particularly, among Hispanic immigrants—as these recent survey data indicate:
In a 2009 Pew Hispanic Center survey, fully 89 percent of Latinos ages 16 to 25 said a college degree was necessary for success in life, a share higher than among all American youths (82 percent). Young Latinos also said their parents emphasized the importance of attending college — some 77 percent said this was the first thing their parents encouraged them to do after high school.

. . . While young Latinos value a college education, fewer than half expect to get a college degree. And when it comes to pursuing a degree, only 29 percent of Latinos ages 18 to 24 are enrolled in college, with enrollment rates higher among the native born than among the foreign born — 36 percent versus 16 percent. (Mark Hugo Lopez, “A Gap for Latinos,” The New York Times: The Downsized College Graduates—Room for Debate, May 24, 2011.)

http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/05/24/the-downsized-college-graduate/a-gap-for-latino-graduates

A 2011 brief for the National Conference of State Legislatures offered this summary statement on the educational attainment and population growth of Latinos:

Latino adults ages 25 to 64 have the lowest educational achievement of any U.S. population group. Only 19 percent hold a two- or four-year college degree, compared to 26 percent of African Americans and 42 percent of whites. At the same time, the 2010 census revealed that the Latino population is growing faster than many predicted. According to census data, the U.S. population increases by four people each minute, and two of the four are Latino. (Brenda Bautsch, Investing in Higher Education for Latinos: Payoffs for State Economies, National Conference of State Legislatures, July 2011, p. 2.)


Further, an August 2011 report of census data analyzed by the Pew Hispanic Center noted an increased postsecondary enrollment by Latino students; it said:

Driven by a single-year surge of 24% in Hispanic enrollment, the number of 18- to 24-year-olds attending college in the United States hit an all-time high of 12.2 million in October 2010, according to a Pew Hispanic Center analysis of newly available Census Bureau data. From 2009 to 2010, the number of Hispanic young adults enrolled in college grew by 349,000, compared with an increase of 88,000 young blacks and 43,000 young Asian Americans and a decrease of 320,000 young non-Hispanic whites.

As a result of these shifts, young Hispanics for the first time outnumbered young blacks on campus, even though young black college enrollment has also grown steadily for decades and it, too, has surged in recent years. (Richard Fry, “Hispanic College Enrollment Spikes, Narrowing...
0.17 Why higher education matters--Some may wonder why access to higher education and success through completion there—particularly, by earning a bachelor’s degree—are so important for young Americans, especially those of low-income. Alberto F. Cabrera and his research team from Penn State University quantified the many benefits that accrue to holders of this college diploma as follows:

A bachelor’s degree is no longer considered a potential stepping-stone to a better life. It is fully acknowledged as the gatekeeper to a myriad of social and individual benefits. A college graduate is far less likely to commit criminal behavior and more prone to participate in civic activities than are less educated individuals. Unemployment rates for bachelor degree holders are 30% lower than individuals who only simply earned a high school diploma (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Each additional year of schooling past high school seems to prolong life by 0.4 percent, or nearly 2 percentage points upon graduation from college (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989). Moreover, earning a college degree is known to produce greater gains in occupational prestige (e.g. Lin & Vogt, 1996) and economic returns (e.g. Leslie & Brinkam, 1986) as compared to simply attaining a high school diploma. Though the social and economic benefits of a college degree are manifold, securing them is tied to a single steppingstone: completing a college degree (Adelman, 1999). (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 1.)

Anthony P. Carnevale, Georgetown University professor and director of its Center on Education and the Workforce, was blunt in his appraisal of the need for low-income kids to matriculate and succeed in higher education, saying “For less-advantaged students, however, not getting to attend college means a lifetime of low-wage jobs instead of economic and social mobility. And that is a future we cannot accept.” (Anthony P. Carnevale, “Yale Versus Jail,” The New York Times, April 1, 2011.)

Carnevale, et al. answer those who question whether college is “worth it”—particularly, during this great recession in America. He and his team respond with this quantified rationale:

When considering the question of whether earning a college degree is worth the investment in these uncertain economic times, here is a number to keep in mind: 84 percent. [emphasis in original] On average, that is how much more money a full-time, full-year worker with a
Bachelor’s degree can expect to earn over a lifetime than a colleague who has no better than a high school diploma. Clearly, for most students, when asked whether to go to college, the answer should be a resounding ‘yes.’ (Anthony P. Carnevale, Jeff Strohl, and Michelle Melton, What’s It Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, May 2011, p. 6.)

In a follow-up report, based on the 2007-2009 American Community Survey, Anthony Carnevale and his research associates succinctly appraised the importance of college completion, as they stated: “The data are clear: a college degree is key to economic opportunity, conferring substantially higher earnings on those with credentials than those without.” (Anthony P. Carnevale, Stephen J. Rose, and Ban Cheah, The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, August 2011, p. 1.)

Their conclusion to that follow-up study indicated the worth of a college degree, as follows:

No matter how you cut it, more education pays. The data presented here show that there is a sizeable economic return to going to college and earning at least a two- or four-year degree. The 33 percent of Bachelor’s degree holders that continue on to graduate and professional schools have even more prosperous futures ahead. Moreover, the difference in earnings between those who go to college and those who don’t is growing — meaning that postsecondary education is more important than ever. (Anthony P. Carnevale, Stephen J. Rose, and Ban Cheah, The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, August 2011, p. 20.)

Editors Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes support this argument regarding the economic payoff for young Americans of a bachelor’s degree in the U.S. Department of Education’s The Condition of Education 2011, citing these statistics:

For young adults ages 25–34 who worked full time throughout a full year, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings. This pattern was consistent for each year examined between 1995 and 2009. For example, young adults with a bachelor’s degree consistently had higher median earnings than those with less education. This relationship of higher median earnings corresponding with higher educational attainment also held across sex and race/ethnicity subgroups.
In 2009, the median of the earnings for young adults with a bachelor’s degree was $45,000, while the median was $21,000 for those without a high school diploma or its equivalent, $30,000 for those with a high school diploma or its equivalent, and $36,000 for those with an associate’s degree. In other words, young adults with a bachelor’s degree earned more than twice as much as young adults without a high school diploma or its equivalent, 50 percent more than young adult high school completers, and 25 percent more than young adults with an associate’s degree. (Susan Aud and Gretchen Hannes, editors, The Condition of Education 2011, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES 2011-034, May 2011, p. 10.) http://www.edweek.org/media/coe-in-brief-final-33condition.pdf

Hechinger Report writer Sarah Butrymowicz emphasized the growing income disparity between those with a 4-year degree and those with only a high school diploma, noting that “In 1980 for instance, salary for those with a bachelor’s degree was 40 percent larger than those with a high school degree. By 2010 that [sic] it was 74 percent larger and if recent trends continue, by 2025 those with a bachelor’s degree will earn 96 percent more than those with a high school diploma.” (Sarah Butrymowicz, “Are Obama’s higher education goals enough?” HechingerEd Blog, June 28, 2011.) http://hechingered.org/content/are-obamas-higher-education-goals-enough_4049/

0.18 Income and SES matter.--The good news is that more students are matriculating today. However, an analysis of their destinations in higher education indicates distinct paths for students of different incomes. Sigal Alon, of Tel-Aviv University, analyzed these distinctions in her article on “the class divide in postsecondary education.” (Sigal Alon, “The Evolution of Class Inequality in Higher Education: Competition, Exclusion, and Adaptation,” American Sociological Review, October 2009, Vol. 74, p. 731.) http://people.socsci.tau.ac.il/mu/salon/files/2010/10/the-evolution.pdf  As Alon stated:

Notably, most of the expansion in the postsecondary educational system occurred in the two-year sector; enrollment rose only slightly at four-year public universities and stagnated at four-year private universities (NCES 2008). Not surprisingly, socioeconomic status is a key determinant not only of college enrollment but of students’ attendance destinations. Since the 1960s, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have been much more likely to attend two-year colleges, while their privileged counterparts matriculate at prestigious four-year institutions (Baker and Velez 1996; Davies and Guppy 1997; Hearn 1984, 1988, 1990, 1991; Karabel and Astin 1975; Karen 2002; Kingston and Lewis 1990; Persell, Catsambis, and Cookson 1992). In 1992, students from families in the bottom quartile of the SES distribution represented only 7 percent of students at four-year secondtier institutions and a meager 3 percent of students at elite schools (Carnevale and Rose 2004; see also Bowen, Kurzweil, and Tobin 2005). (Sigal Alon, “The Evolution of Class Inequality
According to a 2011 brief from the independent, nonprofit Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), a student’s income is a factor as to where they matriculate. Specifically, according to the report,

... Poverty still matters a great deal in terms of the types of institutions at which young adults are initially enrolling. In particular, they find that low-income students—between ages 18 and 26 and whose total household income is near or below the federal poverty level—are likely to be overrepresented at for-profit institutions and are likely to be underrepresented at public and private nonprofit four-year institutions. (Portraits: Initial College Attendance of Low-Income Young Adults, Institute for Higher Education Policy website “publications,” June 2011.) http://www.ihep.org/publications/publications-detail.cfm?id=145

Per Caralee Adams’ post on that report, “... low-income students are increasingly being drawn to proprietary colleges and now attend at four times the rate of other students.” According to Adams, community colleges are now the most frequent destination for all students and for-profit schools are the choice of many low-income applicants—particularly, females. As she states:

Community colleges are the first choice for about half of students at all income levels who pursue postsecondary education. Of the remaining students, 37 percent of those who didn’t grow up in poverty enroll in four-year public or private institutions, and 5 percent enroll in for-profits. Of the low-income students, 19 percent go to a for-profit institution, and 21 percent enroll in a public or private college. Females who grew up in poverty were twice as likely to attend for-profits as males, the brief reveals. (Caralee Adams, “Low-Income Students More Likely to Attend For-Profits,” Education Week: College Bound, June 14, 2011.) http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/college_bound/2011/06/low-income_students_four_times_more_like_to_go_to_for-profits.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+edweek%2FBVuj+%28Education+Week+Blog%3A+College+Bound%29

These choices matter for low-income students, according to the IHEP brief, because, as it relates to success in college, “Where these students initially enroll is of greater consequence than it is to their economically better-off peers because the likelihood of completing college for students from low-income backgrounds depends strongly on where they start their studies.” (Portraits: Initial College Attendance of Low-Income Young Adults, Institute for Higher Education Policy, June 2011, p. 1.) http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/m-r/Portraits-Low-Income_Young_Adults_Attendance_Brief_FINAL_June_2011.pdf
Starkly, this brief notes the following in regard to the first postsecondary choice of all poor women—and, particularly, females of color:

Not only are low-income young females from every racial/ethnic group nearly three times as likely to attend for-profits as their non-poor female counterparts, but more Black and Hispanic females from poor backgrounds started in for-profit institutions than in both public and private four-year institutions combined. These findings are key to understanding how the demand for postsecondary education of vulnerable populations is being met, as well as the potential short- and long-term detriment to persistence and degree attainment of poor young females who attend such institutions, characterized by high levels of unmet need and substantial borrowing (Dillon and Carey 2009; Lynch, Engle and Cruz 2010). (Portraits: Initial College Attendance of Low-Income Young Adults, Institute for Higher Education Policy, June 2011, p. 4.)

http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/m-r/Portraits-Low-Income_Young_Adults_Attendance_Brief_FINAL_June_2011.pdf

Economics columnist David Leonhardt blogged in a related vein for a 2011 article in *The New York Times*, as he wrote:

The truth is that many of the most capable low- and middle-income students attend community colleges or less selective four-year colleges close to their home. Doing so makes them less likely to graduate from college at all, research has shown. Incredibly, only 44 percent of low-income high school seniors with high standardized test scores enroll in a four-year college, according to a Century Foundation report — compared with about 50 percent of high-income seniors who have average test scores. (David Leonhardt, “Top Colleges, Largely for the Elite,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 2011.)


Pulitzer Prize winner Leonhardt is blunt in his opinion on the reason for the postsecondary education completion slide of the U.S. compared to other nations, saying “The United States no longer leads the world in educational attainment, partly because so few low-income students — and surprisingly few middle-income students — graduate from four-year colleges.” (David Leonhardt, “Top Colleges, Largely for the Elite,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 2011.)


Citing the research of others, sociologist Sigal Alon discussed why this may be the case in her analysis of class inequality in college; her explanation was the following:

Middle and high-SES parents are heavily involved with their offspring’s academic activities and tracking placement in high school (Lareau 2000;
These parents convey their postsecondary expectations when their children are young, they better understand the postsecondary landscape and competitive admission process, and they invest in resources to promote college attendance. Since the mid-1980s, these parents have become painfully aware of the stratification in the postsecondary system and the importance of test scores in admission decisions. Vigorous use of expensive test preparation tools, such as private classes and tutors, are a key element of the adaptation strategy. Indeed, 70 percent of privileged seniors use some test preparation activities (30 percent use more than one type of training), compared with less than half of low-SES students (Buchmann, Roscigno, and Condron 2006; see also Briggs 2001; McDonough 1994; NACAC 2009; Powers 1993). Affluent students also take the test multiple times, improving their scores (Vigdor and Clotfelter 2003). This preparation significantly boosts test scores and helps the privileged gain access to selective institutions (Buchmann et al. 2006; NACAC 2009). (Sigal Alon, “The Evolution of Class Inequality in Higher Education: Competition, Exclusion, and Adaptation,” American Sociological Review, October 2009, Vol. 74, pp. 736-737.)


Alon spoke succinctly on the importance of social class to the matriculation of students—particularly, those of low income—as she stated:

This study clearly shows that social class has a direct and persisting impact on enrollment and access to selective postsecondary schooling. Students from low socioeconomic strata were at a marked disadvantage in access to postsecondary education in all three cohorts, and this disadvantage increased with college selectivity. (Sigal Alon, “The Evolution of Class Inequality in Higher Education: Competition, Exclusion, and Adaptation,” American Sociological Review, October 2009, Vol. 74, p. 749.)


Alberto Cabrera and the researchers from Penn State confirmed the correlation of SES, high school academic preparation, and the postsecondary route taken by students, as they noted:

Paths pursued by students to earn a bachelor’s degree do, in fact, vary by socioeconomic status. Lowest-SES students are most likely to journey on the path of medium academic resources and entrance at 2-year institution. The degree completion chances of those who journey on this path are only 3.3 %. At the opposite end, is the case of Highest-SES students who travel on the path of high academic resources and entrance in a 4-year institution. Eighty-one percent of Highest-SES students traveling on this path graduate with a bachelor’s degree. Students from high socioeconomic backgrounds appear to have a relative advantage over students from the lowest socioeconomic levels for most of the pathways to a college degree. In all but one path, students from the highest socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to secure a 4-year
degree than their disadvantaged peers, regardless of academic preparation or port of entry. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 5.)

http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Cabrera, et al. also noted for students of all socioeconomic statuses the importance of initial type of college attended, retention, and persistence as correlated with success; they stated:

The first type of postsecondary institution attended, continuous enrollment in college, and maintaining enrollment in college courses are also important factors in degree completion. For all students, those who first enroll in a 2-year institution are 21% more likely to earn a college degree than those who enroll at a proprietary school. Those who enroll in a 4-year institution are 48% more likely to earn a college degree. The effect of the first type of institution attended is particularly strong for Lowest-SES students. For this group, enrollment at a 2-year institution helps, but starting at a 4-year institution helps even more. Lowest-SES students who started in a 2-year institution increase their chances by 53%. Lowest-SES students who first enroll in a 4-year institution saw their chances to complete their 4-year degree by 79%. Students who do not maintain continuous college enrollment are 23% less likely to earn a bachelor’s degree. Those who drop, withdraw from, or fail to complete between 10%-20% of their coursework are 13% less likely to secure a baccalaureate degree. Dropping, withdrawing from, or failing to complete more than 20% of the coursework reduces a student's chances to complete a degree by 27%. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, pp. 30-31.)

http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Sigal Alon also uses the concepts of “multiple disadvantages” and “overlapping disadvantages,” as well as their “compounding effect,” linking all to the racial/ethnic gap in graduation from elite colleges—particularly, by black males; she observed:

The results clearly demonstrate the compounding effect of multiple disadvantages on students’ graduation likelihood, above and beyond the unique hardship associated with each background characteristic. Underrepresented minority students are more likely to suffer from overlapping disadvantages than whites and Asians. The empirical analysis further supply evidence regarding whether and how this unequal distribution of overlapping disadvantages can account for the racial/ethnic gap in the attainment of a bachelor’s degree. The graduation disadvantage of Hispanics is mostly explained by these compositional differences. A
similar conclusion pertains to Asian students’ overachievement. Regarding blacks the situation is more complex. About 70% of the race gap in graduation from elite institutions is related to the socioeconomic composition of their student body. The remaining share of the gap can be attributed to the compounding effect of overlapping disadvantages on blacks’ achievement. Furthermore, the results show that black male students with overlapping disadvantages are the most vulnerable group of all. (Sigal Alon in press, “Overlapping disadvantages and the racial/ethnic graduation gap among students attending selective institutions,” *Social Science Research*, 2007, p. 21.)


Focusing specifically on the overlapping disadvantages of underrepresented minority students, Alon posited correlations regarding their graduation chances and achievement, according to their gender, race, and class, as follows:

The results, which are based on the College & Beyond database, demonstrate the compounding effect of multiple disadvantages on students’ graduation likelihood, above and beyond the unique hardship associated with each background characteristic. Under-represented minority students are more likely to suffer from overlapping disadvantages than whites and Asians, but given similar constellations of disadvantages most minority students perform as well as whites. However, black students with overlapping disadvantages are slightly less likely to graduate than their white configuration-counterparts. About third of the overall race gap is attributed to the compounding effect of overlapping disadvantages on blacks’ achievement. That black male students with overlapping disadvantages are the most vulnerable group of all reveals an intersection between gender, race and class. (Sigal Alon in press, “Overlapping disadvantages and the racial/ethnic graduation gap among students attending selective institutions,” *Social Science Research*, 2007, p. 1.)


According to Alon, even at elite colleges, underrepresented minority groups face obstacles to their graduation—despite taking into account their “family background, academic preparation, and several school characteristics”—according to their ethnicity, as she concluded:

The results show that black and Hispanic students attending these institutions are less likely to graduate with six years of matriculation than are white students (Model 1, predicted probability is 0.88). Specifically, blacks’ graduation probability is 0.12 lower than whites while being Hispanic decreases the graduation probability by 0.069. Controlling for family background, academic preparation, and several school characteristics (Model 2) attenuates the racial and ethnic
graduation gaps, but not entirely eliminates them. Specifically, blacks’ graduation probability is 0.062 lower than whites while being Hispanic decreases the graduation probability by 0.027, holding all other variables at their mean. (Sigal Alon, “The influence of financial aid in leveling group differences in graduating from elite institutions,” Economics of Education Review 26 (2007), pp. 305-306.)


Which leads to a discussion of racism—yesterday and today in the United States—and how it relates to access and success. A 2009 study found the following in regard to racism: “Although race has and continues to be central to the problems concerning African American college access and equity, its presence and consequences are hardly recognizable without performing a critical examination to uncover it. This type of examination easily leads to one conclusion: racism is real and unlikely to be eradicated despite incremental changes.” (Shaun R. Harper, Lori D. Patton, and Ontario S. Wooden, “Access and Equity for African American Students in Higher Education: A Critical Race Historical Analysis of Policy Efforts,” The Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 80, No. 4 (July/August 2009), p. 404.)

http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=sharper

0.19 Slavery—Among the topics of consideration in higher education today are the links between certain well-known—indeed, renowned--colleges and slavery. Debra Goldschmidt wrote of this in a 2011 posting, saying:

It’s a conversation taking place on campuses around the country as they, too, discover and come to terms with their past ties to slavery. It’s a history shared by Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island; Emory University in Atlanta and Harvard University, the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. All admit they benefited from their relationships with slavery.

Some, like Emory, were physically built by the manual labor of slaves. Early university presidents and leaders at Harvard were slave owners. Still other schools were built with money made from the slave trade. (Debra Goldschmidt, “Colleges come to terms with slave-owning pasts,” CNN U.S., May 23, 2011.)


A resolution passed in April 2009 by the Board of Visitors at the College of William and Mary candidly recognized that institution’s inglorious past treatment of African-Americans; the measure stated:

WHEREAS, the College of William and Mary acknowledges that it owned and exploited slave labor from its founding to the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, the College acknowledges that it engaged in the discrimination and exclusion that characterized educational institutions
during the era of Jim Crow and disfranchisement and that it failed to challenge these hurtful policies . . . (“The Lemon Project: A Journey of Reconciliation,” College of William and Mary, April 2009.)

In the view of UCLA education professor Tyrone C. Howard, discussions today about the achievement gap should take into account these realities from American history—particularly, as they affected particular racial groups. As Howard puts it:

Therefore, any dialogue concerned with a thorough investigation into how to reduce or eliminate achievement gaps between certain student groups must be informed by both an historical understanding of the experiences of those groups in the United States, and an examination of the correlation between their systemic exclusion from educational opportunities and the current state of their educational performance. (Tyrone C. Howard, Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, pp. 11-12.)

According to Howard, many factors influence the achievement gaps involving underachieving groups in America; as he states: “There is undoubtedly a correlation between socioeconomic status and school outcomes, and a litany of data highlights the nexus between race, social class, and school performance, which must be recognized in any analysis of the achievement gap across racial groups (Rothstein, 2004).” (Tyrone C. Howard, Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, pp. 46-47.)

In Howard’s view, upgrading the educational opportunities for underrepresented racial groups in the United States relates to our national morality: “Certainly, settling the educational debt owed to underachieving and marginalized students of color in the form of radical improvements in the quality of their educational experiences and outcomes is a moral imperative. It is the right and just thing to do.” [emphasis in original] (Tyrone C. Howard, Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, p. xxi.)

The consequences of not doing so, in his opinion, would be serious, as he warns: “If current achievement gaps continue over the next several decades, an increasing proportion of the nation’s citizens will be severely undereducated and ill prepared to compete in a global economy. This potential reality would cause grave political, economic, and social consequences for the United States.” (Tyrone C. Howard, Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement
Howard cites another major commentator on education in American in making his case, stating the following:

Darling-Hammond (2007) argues that there is a ‘legacy of inequality in U.S. education’ that explains the different levels of outcomes across racial and social class groups. She maintains that ‘educational outcomes for students of color are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers and quality curriculum, than they are a function of race’ (p. 320). (Tyrone C. Howard, Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, p. 31.)

Furthermore, he posits multicultural education as a way to improve the academic achievement of diverse students, noting that “An important goal of multicultural education is to disrupt the cycle of hegemony, inequality, and oppression that results in low academic achievement among students of diverse backgrounds (Banks, 2002).” (Tyrone C. Howard, Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, p. 44.)

In addition, Howard pulled no punches in laying out a fundamental premise—and major goal—of multicultural education, as he declared:

Multicultural education begins with the assumption that we do not live in an equal and fair society. Scholars in the field assert that we live in a racist, sexist, and classist society where certain aspects of schools and society favor the ‘haves’ over the ‘have-nots’ (Nieto, 2000). As a result of our unequal society, school curricula and practices are frequently Eurocentric, biased, and one-sided, thereby negatively affecting students of color, girls, and low-income students. Dismantling these hegemonic systems is one of the major goals of multicultural education (Sleeter & Grant, 2003), in the hope that interrupting the cycle of inequality and oppression also can counteract the lack of achievement among students of diverse backgrounds. (Tyrone C. Howard, Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, p. 45.)

Finally, he also espoused empathetic teaching to eliminate harmful assumptions about students from underrepresented groups and refers to culturally relevant pedagogy to improve students’ competency; Howard said that
Central to empathetic teaching is the eradication of deficit-based thinking that frequently serves as a major obstacle to academic success for countless students, particularly those from culturally diverse and low-income backgrounds. In contrast, a firm belief in students’ academic potential can be viewed as a personal and vested interest that teachers take in their students’ performance. Ladson-Billings (1994) suggested that one of the central tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy is an authentic belief that students from culturally diverse and low-income backgrounds are capable learners. She maintains that if students are treated as if they are competent, they ultimately will demonstrate high degrees of competence. (Tyrone C. Howard, *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms*, New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2010, p. 48.)

**0.20 To zap the achievement gap—and unstack the odds**—Two observers, privileged to attend elite Princeton University, noticed and commented on the situation facing less-fortunate American students today. First, Wendy Kopp, Princeton graduate and the founder of Teach for America—which she based on her senior thesis—noted in a recent online video interview: “. . . Where you’re born really determines your educational prospects and, in turn, your life prospects. And I just thought that is, I believe, our country’s most fundamental injustice.” (Rick Stengel, “10 Questions for Teach for America’s Wendy Kopp,” *Time Video*)

http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,764185307001_2044692,00.html

Kopp compared the situation of her own children living in New York to low-income kids in the same city. She offered this appraisal:

A few blocks north, the statistical odds of success are very different. Unless parents or their children demonstrate extraordinary and sustained effort while juggling all the challenges of poverty, and get some lucky breaks as well in the form of access to special opportunities and extra supports and resources, the statistically probable path is that a child will not attend college and will not enjoy the breadth of educational, economic, and life opportunities that my children will enjoy. This is due not to differences in ability or motivation but rather to the luck of their birth. (Wendy Kopp with Steven Farr, *A Chance To Make History: What Works and What Doesn’t in Providing an Excellent Education for All*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2011, p. 3.)

Another person enjoying the benefit of a Princeton education was Emily Myerson, Class of 2012 and member of the university’s chapter of Students for Education Reform; she had this to say regarding her schooling versus that of others: “The disparities between what I was receiving and what other Americans were receiving are horrifying, un-American, undemocratic and unjust.” (Pritha Dasgupta, “Students for Education Reform expands, adding 13 new chapters
across country,” The Daily Princetonian, April 26, 2011.)
http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2011/04/26/28418/

Fittingly, perhaps, at her 2011 Commencement Address, Princeton President Shirley M. Tilghman “. . . implored this year’s graduates to use their knowledge to improve the country’s K-12 education system.” (Ruth Stevens, “Tilghman calls on graduates to close the educational achievement gap,” News at Princeton, June 2, 2011.)

Tilghman noted that “Education has always been, and will continue to be, our most powerful engine for social mobility.” In spite of that, she said, “I find it deeply paradoxical that the United States has without question the finest colleges and universities in the world, but a K-12 education system that is leaving vast numbers of students behind.” Further, Tilghman observed that “What is downright distressing is the fact that a student’s chances of being in the bottom quartile and never finishing high school are almost entirely determined by his or her family circumstances. Just consider the fact that the best predictor of SAT score is family income.” (President Shirley M. Tilghman, “2011 President’s Commencement Address,” May 31, 2011.)

Related to this, President Tilghman addressed the economic cost to the nation of the achievement gap, saying:

A recent study by the consulting firm McKinsey concluded that the current educational achievement gap “creates the equivalent of a permanent deep recession in terms of the gap between actual and potential output in the economy” and estimated that closing that gap could boost gross domestic product by as much as 16 percent. The future prosperity of everyone depends on the closure of that gap.

Tilghman closed her address by saying “. . . it is going to require a renewed commitment in this country to promoting the educational achievements of everyone, not just the lucky ones.”
(President Shirley M. Tilghman, “2011 President’s Commencement Address,” May 31, 2011.)

Those trying to close the achievement gap have their work cut out for them—and it’s no simple matter. Richard Rothstein emphasizes the complexity of this task, as he stated:

Policymakers almost universally conclude that persistent achievement gaps must result from wrongly designed school policies — either expectations that are too low, teachers who are insufficiently qualified,
curricula that are badly designed, classes that are too large, school climates that are too undisciplined, leadership that is too unfocused, or a combination of these. This exclusive focus on schooling is wrong. Without complementary investments in early childhood preparation, health care, housing, after-school and summer programs, and other social and economic supports, the achievement gap will never be closed. (Richard Rothstein, “Reforms That Could Help Narrow the Achievement Gap,” Policy Perspectives, WestEd, 2006, p. 1.)
http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/pp-06-02.pdf

Columbia (MO) Public Schools’ Superintendent Chris Belcher was quoted as follows in regard to closing the achievement gap: “It's like trying to change the tire on a moving car.” Targeting the achievement gap two years ago when he started in the district, Belcher described the importance of its closing in this way: “This isn’t just a school issue,” he says. “The fewer people who graduate from our schools, the more dropouts we have in our community and the more poverty perpetuates. Because we know if you drop out of high school, your job status is pretty much set that you’re not going to make a lot of money. And you’ll have kids. And there we go again.” According to a newspaper account, Belcher enlisted “an army of volunteers” from the community in 2009 “… to identify causes and solutions both in school and beyond.” (Sarah Horn, “Belcher’s volunteer army attacks achievement gap in schools and beyond,” Missourian, May 24, 2011.)

These gaps are reflected in kids’ access and success in postsecondary education, affecting both students’ hopes and plans. Watson Scott Swail, et al. reported on this in a 2003 study:

Today about half of students with dreams and aspirations based on their future receipt of an earned certificate or degree leave with that dream either stalled or ended. Access and completion rates for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students have always lagged behind white and Asian students, as have those for low-income students and students with disabilities. Although postsecondary enrollment rates for students of color are at levels similar to white and Asian students, access to four-year colleges, especially our nation’s most selective institutions, remains inequitable. Beyond access, students of color have not earned degrees at the same rates as other students. (Watson Scott Swail, with Kenneth E. Redd and Laura W. Perna, Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education: A Framework for Success, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report: Volume 30, Number 2, Adrianna J. Kezar, Series Editor, 2003, p. v.)

Being from a low-income family is, indeed, an obstacle to college access and success. Various data indicate this, including these facts from a 2011 report of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP):
Today, 30.6 percent of all Americans aged 25 to 29 have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. For students from low-income families, the college completion rate is even lower: only 8.3 percent have earned a bachelor’s degree by their mid-20s. These low college completion rates are diminishing the United States’ promise and economic competitiveness worldwide. While America is first in the world in the percentage of adults aged 55 to 65 with a two- or four-year degree, our ranking slips to eighth in the percentage of 25- to 34-year olds who have completed college. (*The Promise Of College Completion: KIPP’s Early Successes and Challenges*, Knowledge Is Power Program, April 28, 2011, p. 4.)


Commenting on current college completion rates while speaking with Rick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute, KIPP CEO Richard Barth emphasized the following:

One risk is we’ve learned ‘to college’ is not ‘through college.’ The whole country is focusing on high school graduation rates and getting kids to college. We’re shedding light on the fact that the difference between ‘to college’ and ‘through college’ is massive. (Rick Hess, “Straight Up Conservation [sic]: KIPP CEO Richard Barth on the College Completion Challenge,” *Education Week—Rick Hess Straight Up*, June 20, 2011.)

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2011/06/straight_up_conservaition_kipp_ceo_richard_barth_on_the_college_completion_challenge.html

As the KIPP report noted, family income is a factor in high school students’ eventual college graduation—even when kids’ high school achievement is taken into account—indicating how odds are stacked, as it stated:

Family income is historically one of the strongest predictors of a student’s college success, far outpacing the impact of high school performance. High-achieving, high-income students are more than 2.5 times as likely to graduate college as high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds. Even the lowest performing students from high-income backgrounds graduate college at a higher rate than the highest-performing students from underserved communities. That means a student’s family circumstances, a factor beyond his or her control, often determine his or her path in life. (*The Promise Of College Completion: KIPP’s Early Successes and Challenges*, Knowledge Is Power Program, April 28, 2011, p. 6.)


Compared to high-SES students, kids from low-income families who are the first in their families to pursue higher education have the odds stacked against them in various other ways, according to an article by UCLA higher education professor Patricia M. McDonough, in which she indicated the following:
Advantaged college applicants and their parents constantly stack the deck in their own favor by improvising counseling supports. In contrast, underrepresented minorities who are primarily first-generation college bound are making their college access decisions in the post-affirmative action era constrained by lack of individual, parental, and school college knowledge and experience; lack of trained professionals to advise them; and often in a climate of presumed lack of merit, racial hostility, and unwelcomeness. These students struggle to get basic information and meet published eligibility requirements in schools without adequate honors and advanced placement classes; they are unaware of the improvised practices of their high-SES competitors and could not afford to engage in these practices even if they knew about them. (Patricia M. McDonough, “Counseling Matters: Knowledge, Assistance, and Organizational Commitment in College Preparation,” in William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 85.)

Anthony Cabrera, et al. summarized obstacles that low-income students fortunate enough to matriculate confronted when pursuing a college degree, as they noted the following:

Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal’s (2001) comprehensive review of the literature informs us that low-income students are already handicapped by a variety of adverse factors while attending college. These factors include: low participation rates at the 4-year sector; enrolling on a part-time basis; delayed enrollment after high school completion; working full-time; dropping, withdrawing from, or not completing college credits; and being a parent. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 18.)
http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Not only does high income give an edge to advantaged students when it comes to access and success, but so, too, does having parents with more education. As Susan P. Choy stated, “A young person’s likelihood of attending a four-year college increases with the level of their parents’ education. This is true even for the most highly qualified high school seniors.” (Susan P. Choy, Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students, American Council on Education, 2002, p. 5.) http://inpathways.net/access.pdf

According to Choy, those students without college-educated parents are handicapped in matriculating to and persisting in higher education—regardless of other factors they may possess; in fact, she noted that “... Students whose parents did not go to college are less likely to enroll in college or persist toward a bachelor’s degree than their peers with college-educated parents, even after
researchers controlled for other factors such as income, educational expectations, academic preparation, parental involvement, and peer influence. (Susan P. Choy, Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students, American Council on Education, 2002, p. 33.)  

The prospect of first-generation higher-education students completing college can be gauged by the percentage of 4-year degree graduates whose parents' highest level of education was high school. According to a 2011 report of the U.S. Department of Education, that proportion is small; it stated: “About 20 percent of 2007–08 first-time bachelor’s degree recipients had parents whose highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma or less.” (Emily Forrest Cataldi, et al., 2008-09 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study [B&B:08/09]; First Look, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics—Institute of Education Sciences, NCES 2011-236, July 2011, p. 3.)  

Nonetheless, per Susan Choy, if first-generation college students can graduate, they benefit in the job market—just like students whose parents had degrees; she stated that “Although students whose parents did not go to college are at a disadvantage with respect to college access and persistence, if they do finish a bachelor’s degree, their employment outcomes are similar to those of their peers with college-educated parents.” (Susan P. Choy, Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students, American Council on Education, 2002, p. 6.)  

Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley also talked of the edge given to children whose parents had a college education, suggesting they belong to an advantaged “subculture” in the U.S.; they opined:

The nearly uniform advantages received by the children of the college-educated professionals suggest the evolution of an increasingly distinct subculture in American society, one in which adults routinely transmit to their offspring the symbolic thinking and confident problem solving that mark the adults’ economic activities and that are so difficult for outsiders to acquire in midlife. A trend toward separation into subcultures jeopardizes the upward mobility that has given this nation greatness and presages the tragedy of downward mobility that produces increasing numbers of working poor. (Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children, Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1995, p. 204.)

Stephen Krashen, professor emeritus at USC, commented on these favored students in regard to their performance on international tests—versus kids in “high poverty schools”—as he stated:

American students from well-funded schools who come from high-income families outscore all or nearly all other countries on international tests.
Only our children in high poverty schools score below the international average. The US has the second highest percentage of children in poverty of all industrialized countries (22.4%, compared to Sweden's 2.6%) which of course pulls down our overall average. The success of American children who are not in poverty shows that our educational system has been successful; the problem is poverty. (Anthony Cody, Interview with Stephen Krashen: “Children need food, health care, and books. Not new standards and tests,” Education Week Teacher: Living in Dialogue, May 10, 2010.)

In Krashen’s view, “When the problem of poverty is solved, all children will have the advantages that right now only middle-class children have. This will close the “achievement gap” between children from high and low-income families.” (Anthony Cody, Interview with Stephen Krashen: “Children need food, health care, and books. Not new standards and tests,” Education Week Teacher: Living in Dialogue, May 10, 2010.)

Another gap that jeopardizes the college access and success of poor kids is one in reading—that fundamental ability to comprehend text, often viewed as the sine qua non for academic achievement. Gordon Macinnes related reading—or lack thereof—to the achievement gap, as follows:

. . . Let us start by looking at the achievement gap between poor and middle-class students. For almost fifty years, we have indisputable evidence of how the gap originates: children from poor families, through no fault of their own, are not prepared for kindergarten with the vocabulary, general knowledge, stories, and familiarity with books that they need to become strong readers by third grade. We also know for certain that reading is a practice learned in the primary grades or not at all. In short, starting early and emphasizing literacy in elementary school are crucial steps in closing this gap. (Gordon Macinnes, “The President Draws a Line . . . Maybe,” Taking Note: A Century Foundation Group Blog, April 4, 2011.)

Teacher Andrea Neal commented in a blog posting on the reading skills of children of differing race and SES in the school year—and during the summer months; she stated:

The pioneering study on the subject was done in 1978 by Barbara Heyns, who followed 3,000 sixth and seventh graders in Atlanta, Ga. through two school years and the intervening summer. She concluded ‘the gap between black and white children and between low and high
income children widens disproportionately during the months when schools are not in session.’

Similarly, a 1996 study found that middle-income students experienced reading gains during the summer while low-income students regressed. (Andrea Neal, “Effective summer reading programs can narrow the achievement gap,” Evansville Courier & Press, June 21, 2011.) http://www.courierpress.com/news/2011/jun/21/effective-summer-reading-programs-can-narrow-the/

A literature review by RAND Education focused on the effect of summer vacation on kids’ abilities in math and reading; this report dealt with losses of skills among students from families of various income levels. Its first “key finding” emphasized the detrimental effect of summer on the reading skills of low-income students:

**Summer Learning Loss, Which Is Disproportionate and Cumulative, Contributes Substantially to the Achievement Gap. (emphasis in original)** Research indicates that, on average, students lose skills over the summer, particularly in mathematics. However, not all students experience “average” losses, and summer learning loss disproportionately affects low-income students. Low-income students lose substantial ground in reading during the summer, while their higher-income peers often gain. Most disturbing is that it appears that summer learning loss is cumulative and that, over time, these periods of differential learning rates between low-income and higher-income students contribute substantially to the achievement gap in reading. It may be that efforts to close the achievement gap during the school year alone will be unsuccessful. (Jennifer Sloan McCombs, et al., *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning*, RAND Education, 2011, p. xv.) http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1120.sum.pdf

Similarly, in his bestselling book on success, Malcolm Gladwell described the research of Johns Hopkins sociologist Karl Alexander, who compared the progress of 650 Baltimore first-graders (of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status) on the California Achievement Test. In Gladwell’s observation, poor kids were at a distinct disadvantage in reading--particularly, over the summer months--as he stated:

*When it comes to reading skills, poor kids learn nothing when school is not in session.* (emphasis in original) The reading scores of the rich kids, by contrast, go up by a whopping 52.49 points. Virtually all of the advantage that wealthy students have over poor
students is the result of differences in the way privileged kids learn while they are not in school. [emphasis in original]

Per the view of Ralph Smith, Casey Foundation executive vice president, "We will never close the achievement gap, we will never solve our dropout crisis, we will never break the cycle of poverty that afflicts so many children if we don’t make sure that all of our students learn to read.” (Ralph Smith, “Friday Churn: Importance of reading,” Education News Colorado, April 8, 2011.) http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2011/04/08/17279-friday-churn-importance-of-reading

According to Donald J. Hernandez, sociology professor at Hunter College who examined a national database of students born during the period 1979-1989, this reading gap affects the likelihood that students will graduate by age 19 from high school; indeed, he found that “One in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.” Further, in the view of Hernandez, those students who are both poor and who have difficulty reading face “double jeopardy”; he stated:

Educators and researchers have long recognized the importance of mastering reading by the end of third grade. Students who fail to reach this critical milestone often falter in the later grades and drop out before earning a high school diploma. Now, researchers have confirmed this link in the first national study to calculate high school graduation rates for children at different reading skill levels and with different poverty rates. Results of a longitudinal study of nearly 4,000 students find that those who don’t read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers. For the worst readers, those couldn’t master even the basic skills by third grade, the rate is nearly six times greater. While these struggling readers account for about a third of the students, they represent more than three fifths of those who eventually drop out or fail to graduate on time. What’s more, the study shows that poverty has a powerful influence on graduation rates. The combined effect of reading poorly and living in poverty puts these children in double jeopardy. (Donald J. Hernandez, Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, April 2011, p. 3.)
http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/DoubleJeopardyHowThirdGradeReadingSkillsandPovery/DoubleJeopardyReport040511FINAL.pdf
Writing in *Education Week*, Catherine Gewertz commented on this study—and state initiatives to improve reading, posting the following:

In drafting laws and designing initiatives, politicians and educators are relying on a growing mound of research that points to 3rd grade reading proficiency as a crucial milestone. One of the latest studies, released in April, found that children who aren’t reading on grade level by 3rd grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school by age 19 than peers who are. If those struggling readers are poor, they’re 13 times likelier to be high school dropouts than their reading-proficient peers. (Catherine Gewertz, “States Target Early Years to Reach 3rd Grade Reading Goals,” *Education Week*, June 29, 2011.)


Lest anyone think challenges to college access and success are found only in urban areas, it should be noted that students—particularly, Native Americans—in rural areas face many obstacles. Indeed, a July 2011 blog-post by Diette Courrege commented on such issues; she stated:

One of the big problems discussed at the Southeast Regional Rural Education Summit last week was the difficulty rural schools face in getting students to go to college. Speaker after speaker agreed that one of the major hurdles is family support. They said that, in many cases, students aren’t encouraged by their families to seek post-secondary education. (Diette Courrege, “Rural Struggle: Get Students to Graduate, Go To College,” *Education Week—Rural Education*, July 27, 2011.)

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rural_education/2011/07/rural_schools_struggle_to_graduate_students_send_them_to_college.html

In fact, a 2007 report on rural America by the U.S. Department of Education noted lower parental expectations there for their children’s postsecondary educational attainment, stating “The percentage of rural students whose parents expected their highest educational attainment to be less than a bachelor’s degree (42 percent) was larger than the percentages of students in cities and suburban areas (30 and 25 percent, respectively).” (Stephen Provasnik, Angelina KewalRamani, Mary McLaughlin Coleman, Lauren Gilbertson, Will Herrin, and Qingshu Xie, *Status of Education in Rural America* (NCES 2007-040), Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. iv.) http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007040.pdf This situation may exist because of the parents’ level of education; according to the report, “The percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of educational attainment in 2004 was lower in rural areas (13 percent) than the national percentage (17 percent).” (Stephen Provasnik, Angelina KewalRamani, Mary McLaughlin Coleman, Lauren Gilbertson, Will Herrin, and Qingshu Xie, *Status of Education in Rural America* (NCES 2007-040), Washington, DC: National Center for Education
That same federal report summarized comparative data on college-enrollment rates, by location in the U.S., noting rural areas’ position in the pecking order, as follows:

In 2004, approximately 34 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in colleges or universities. The college enrollment rate in rural areas (27 percent) was lower than the rate in cities (37 percent), suburban areas (37 percent), or towns (32 percent). (Stephen Provasnik, Angelina KewalRamani, Mary McLaughlin Coleman, Lauren Gilbertson, Will Herrin, and Qingshu Xi, *Status of Education in Rural America* (NCES 2007-040), Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 64.)  

Significantly for the future, the population of rural students is growing—in importance, size, diversity, and poverty—according to an August 2011 posting on *Education Week* by Marty Strange; he noted:

Rural schools are increasingly important to the success of the nation’s educational goals. Rural school enrollment is growing both absolutely and as a percentage of national totals. Between 2004 and 2009, rural schools grew 11 percent, from 10.5 million students to 11.7 million, and the rural share of the nation’s students increased from 22 percent to 24 percent, according to data from the Department of Education.

Rural enrollment is also becoming more diverse. Growth in that period was fastest among students of color, up 31 percent. Today, they constitute 28 percent of rural students.

The highest-poverty rural schools are even more diverse. Fifty-nine percent of students in rural districts ranking in the top 10 percent of poverty are students of color—28 percent African-American, 23 percent Hispanic, and 8 percent Native. Thirty-seven percent are disadvantaged, about the same rate as the poorest inner-city school districts. (Marty Strange, “Rural Student Success Critical to National Goals,” *Education Week*, August 23, 2011.)  

An important irony regarding rural students, contained in a posting by Diette Courrege, concerned their college completion: “Students from rural areas have lower college enrollment rates than their urban peers, but once rural students get to college, they’re more likely to graduate.” (Diette Courrege, “How Two Rural Schools Prepare Kids for College, Part 1,” *Education Week*—*Rural Education*, July 29,
When we consider children who have the odds stacked against them regarding college access and success, the nearly 1 million homeless come to mind. Indeed, these kids may have a combination of disadvantages already discussed—and also be without a home. Data regarding these homeless children—and their performance in school—were offered in a recent newspaper article, which noted:

Nationally, the number of homeless students at public schools reached an all-time high after the recession hit. In the 2008-9 school year, there were 954,914 homeless students, compared with 679,724 in 2006-7, according to the latest data from the United States Department of Education.

Homeless children fare significantly worse in school than other poor children. In Virginia, 21.2 percent of students who are homeless at some point during their high school years drop out, compared with 14.8 percent of all poor children, the state’s Department of Education says. In Colorado, the high school graduation rate is 72 percent for all students, 59 percent for poor students and 48 percent for homeless students, according to data from the state’s education Web site. (Michael Winerip, “Homeless, but Finding Sanctuary at School,” The New York Times, May 1, 2011.)

Matthew Lynch, Widener University education professor, put the number of homeless children in the United States even higher—at 1,500,000. In regard to their schooling, he offers this simple—yet powerful—assertion: “Homeless children deserve a quality education just like all students.” (Matthew Lynch, “Matthew Lynch: Educating and Nurturing Homeless Students,” EducationNews.org, June 28, 2011.)

A July 2011 posting by Libby A. Nelson commented on both a rise in the number of homeless college students and their origin, as she stated: “The number of homeless youth has increased 69 percent in the past two years, to 1.6 million. Some are runaways; others are from chaotic family situations, maintaining contact with parents and siblings but spending the majority of nights on friends’ couches or in cars or mobile homes.” (Libby A. Nelson, “In College, Without a Home,” Inside Higher Ed, July 21, 2011.)

The final group to mention regarding access and equity are those often viewed as handicapped—that is, those students qualifying for special education
services. The U.S. Department of Education calls them students with “disabilities,” which it defined “. . . as a physical or mental condition that causes functional limitations that substantially limit one or more major life activities, including mobility, communication (seeing, hearing, speaking), and learning.” (Kimberley Raue and Laurie Lewis, *Students With Disabilities at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education--National Center for Education Statistics, June 2011, p. 1.) [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011018.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011018.pdf)

An online posting on that Department’s latest report, for its Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Serves (OSERS), stated the following:

> About one-third of the students had a **specific learning disability**. A large number of the institutions, 93 percent, offered some students with disabilities additional time to take exams, and 71 percent offered the students an alternative exam format. At 77 percent of the colleges, students with disabilities were provided with note-takers; 72 percent provided written course notes or help with learning strategies; and 70 offered ‘adaptive equipment and technology.’ (“88% of Colleges Report Enrolling Students With Disabilities,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Ticker*, June 23, 2011.) [http://chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/88-of-colleges-report-enrolling-students-with-disabilities/34159](http://chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/88-of-colleges-report-enrolling-students-with-disabilities/34159)

The report estimated the number of students with disabilities attending our nation’s universities, as it stated the following:

> Institutions reported enrolling approximately 707,000 students with disabilities in the 12-month 2008-09 academic year, with about half of these students reported enrolled in public 2-year institutions (table 2). While the reported number of students with disabilities is overestimated due to duplicated student counts, this estimate largely reflects unduplicated counts of students with disabilities; most institutions (94 percent) provided an unduplicated count of the total number of students with disabilities at their institution. (Kimberley Raue and Laurie Lewis, *Students With Disabilities at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education--National Center for Education Statistics, June 2011, p. 3.) [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011018.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011018.pdf)

Beyond that enrollment figure, however, the federal government reported little germane to this book about students with disabilities—not the percentage that matriculated to higher education nor the percentage (of the total number or even those who matriculated) that graduated. It is as though they were invisible.

To pierce that invisibility, there is a 2011 posting—of comments and pertinent advice for students--from Meghan Benzel, writing in *The Washington*
Post; she began: “This spring I graduated from college, along with thousands of students across the country. But my academic journey was a little different than most. I am a non-visual learner, and I have AD/HD and components of Asperger’s Syndrome. For those of you preparing for college with a learning disability: I understand. I’ve been there.” (Meghan Benzel, “Preparing for college with a learning disability,” The Washington Post—Campus Overload, July 11, 2011.)

I’ll end this introduction by quoting Elaine Farris, the first African-American to hold a full-time superintendent’s job in Kentucky, who declared this: "Poverty and race are not destiny. We have to embrace the idea that we have a moral obligation to ensure that we provide an equitable education for all of our students." (Dan Dickson, “Third in a series: The search for Fayette County’s next schools chief,” Business Lexington, June 10, 2011.)

For those who say “It’s always been this way—we’ve always had underprivileged kids who struggled academically,” I cite this statement about effective schools from one of the leaders of that movement, Ron Edmonds, who asked:

How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. (Ronald Edmonds, “Effective Schools for the Urban Poor,” Educational Leadership, 37(1), October 1979, p. 23.)

For those who wonder “Why should we care—it’s not our kids?” I quote the American educational philosopher John Dewey, who declared “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children.” (John Dewey, The School and Society, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1900, p. 3.)
http://books.google.com/books?id=GWYWAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false

For those underrepresented kids who “know the score,” it’s okay for them to identify with the East Dillon High quarterback in a recent television series, who said “Just, I was born with two strikes against me.” (Vince Howard in “Texas Whatever,” Friday Night Lights, Season 5: Disc 3, 2010.)

And for those poor kids who still dream of college, I’d remind them of these lyrics from singer-songwriter Bob Dylan: “The slow one now will

And I’d tell them to remember actor Harrison Ford’s words in, perhaps, his most famous role: “Don’t EVER tell me the odds.” (Han Solo in George Lucas, *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back.*)

For the rest of us, I’d recall these lines from Dr. Seuss:

“Mister! He said with a sawdusty sneeze,

“I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees.

I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues.

And I’m asking you, sir, at the top of my lungs”—. . . .

UNLESS someone like you

Cares a whole awful lot,

Nothing is going to get better.


And I’d cite this quotation from Senator Robert F. Kennedy, recalled by education reformer Linda Darling-Hammond during her address at commencement of Columbia University’s Teachers College on May 18, 2011: “It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.” (Linda Darling-Hammond, “The Service of Democratic Education,” *The Nation*, undated.)

http://www.thenation.com/article/160850/service-democratic-education

And this one from Marian Wright Edelman, in her Foreword to the 2011 report of the Children’s Defense Fund:

Let’s leave our nation and world better than we found it—more just, more hopeful, more peaceful, more productive, and more unified. This may be the first time in our history when our children and grandchildren will be worse off than their parents and grandparents. We must correct course with urgency and do whatever is necessary to get them to safe harbor.

We have pushed so many of our children into the tumultuous sea of life in small and leaky boats without survival gear and compass. I hope God will forgive us and help our children to forgive us. (*The State of America’s Children 2011*, Children’s Defense Fund, July 18, 2011 p. viii.)

In a post entitled “Dead Child Walking,” former reporter and now Chicago science teacher Marilyn Rhames described 17-year old “Monique” as asking her to do the following:

‘Pray for my boyfriend, that he will get himself together and that he won’t end up dead,’ she said. Then she named at least eight of her friends who have been gunned down in Chicago in the last couple of years. Her future prom date was the latest victim, shot and killed in June—just three days after his high school graduation.

‘He was jumping up and down, happy because he graduated,’ Monique said, ‘but what was the point of that achievement if he’s gonna be dead?’ (Marilyn Rhames, “Dead Child Walking,” Education Week—Teacher: Charting My Own Course, August 31, 2011.)

In an earlier posting, Rhames had described a third-grade student, Montana, who could not read. Of him, she said this:

Looking at Montana’s angelic face, I saw the beauty and joy of life. But surrounding him were the cancers of his run-down community, ever ready to attack any wholesome cell within him. The gangs. The drugs. The sexual abuse. The culture of incarceration. The gun violence. The normality of death, marked by weather-torn memorials of teddy bears and balloons casually placed on sidewalks or tied to random chain-link fences.

I knew that teaching Montana how to read could very well save his life. His future, his quality of life depended on it ... on me doing my job. At the very least, learning to read would give him a fighting chance to graduate from high school, despite the fact that only 48 percent of black boys in America ever do. (Marilyn Rhames, “Teaching the At-Risk: A Matter of Life and Death,” Education Week—Teacher: Charting My Own Course, August 10, 2011.)
http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/charting_my_own_course/reading/

Rhames likened her teaching to being a physician, trying to heal her students of “certain academic ailments.” She comments on these, as follows:

There are so many types of cancers that relentlessly stalk our children. Sometimes the cancer is so aggressive that it overtakes our students, despite our efforts. Kids die mentally, emotionally, and sometimes even physically. But it cannot be for the lack of our efforts. **We cannot have their blood on our hands.** (Marilyn Rhames, “Teaching the At-Risk: A Matter of Life and Death,” Education Week—Teacher: Charting My Own Course, August 10, 2011.)
http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/charting_my_own_course/reading/

I’ll end with this question from The Bible: “What does the LORD require of you but to do justice . . . ?” (MICAH 6:8)

Chapter 1: Are the odds stacked?


On February 24, 2009, President Barack Obama addressed a joint session of Congress. In that speech, the President said the nation must face “. . . the urgent need to expand the promise of education in America.” As President Obama put it: “Right now, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require more than a high school diploma. And yet, just over half of our citizens have that level of education. We have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation. And half of the students who begin college never finish.” (Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery Address to Joint Session of Congress, Tuesday, February 24th, 2009.) http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress/

The President continued: “. . . it will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education – from the day they are born to the day they begin a career.” Then, he announced this national goal in unmistakable language: “That is why we will provide the support necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.” (Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery Address to Joint Session of Congress, Tuesday, February 24th, 2009.) http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress/

According to an article by Jon Marcus in The Hechinger Report, posted two years after President Obama announced his college-completion goal, prospects for achieving it are not rosy. Indeed, as it stated:
Yet conversations with dozens of experts and reviews of available data show that obstacles on the road to graduation have only gotten greater in the two years since then. Few believe the 2020 target will be met.

‘The outlook is not good,’ says Michael Lovenheim, an assistant professor of policy analysis and management at Cornell University and coauthor of an influential study that found students are taking more, not less, time to graduate. (Jon Marcus, “Two years after Obama’s college graduation initiative, major obstacles remain,” The Hechinger Report, July 11, 2011.)

Furthermore, a spring 2011 survey of college presidents in the U.S. indicated that “nearly two-thirds of college presidents (64%) say it is unlikely that, by 2020, the U.S. will achieve the goal set by President Obama to have the highest share of young adults with a college degree or certificate of any country in the world.” (Paul Taylor, ed., Is College Worth It? College Presidents, Public Assess Value, Quality and Mission of Higher Education, Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center—Social & Demographic Trends, May 16, 2011, p. 2.)

Thus, despite this presidential focus on college graduation—and the media attention in recent years given to the importance of continuing education beyond high school—many students are failing to matriculate to higher education and complete college—in no small part, it seems, because the odds are stacked against them. Simply put, when it comes to college access and success today, many American students are being left out. They are at-risk.

College instructor Melissa E. Lee writes of teaching “at-risk” students and defines them in this way: “At-risk students usually share one or more of the following obstacles: Their families live below the poverty line, they are black or Hispanic, they come from single-parent homes, their mothers have less than a high-school education, the primary language spoken at home is not English. A report by the National Center for Education Statistics, ‘Programs at Higher Education Institutions for Disadvantaged Precollege Students’ (2005), adds to that list one more risk factor: belonging to ‘the first generation in the family to attend college.’ A 2009 article in the National Education Association's Higher Education Journal explains the impediments first-generation college students can face: ‘parental ambivalence, lack of understanding, and even hostility to [the] child’s college plans.’” [emphasis in original] (Melissa E. Lee, “How to Teach English to At-Risk College Students,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 23, 2011.)

A newspaper account of a 2011 initiative targeting minority youth by New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg referred to at-risk males as follows:
Even as crime has fallen and graduation rates have risen in New York over the past decade, city officials said that black and Latino men, especially those between ages 16 and 24, remained in crisis by nearly every measure, including rates of arrest, school suspension and poverty.

Although the populations of young white, black and Latino men in New York are roughly the same size, 84 percent of those in the city’s detention facilities and nearly all of those admitted to children’s and family services facilities are black and Latino youth, according to data from the Bloomberg administration. “The magnitude of the disparities is stunning,” said Linda I. Gibbs, the deputy mayor for health and human services. “It’s tragic.” (Michael Barbaro and Fernanda Santos, “Bloomberg to Use Own Funds in Plan to Aid Minority Youth,” The New York Times, August 3, 2011.) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/04/nyregion/new-york-plan-will-aim-to-lift-minority-youth.html?pagewanted=all?src=tp

Marian Wright Edelman, CDF CEO, summarized the situation of minority youth today, as follows:

Right now, The State of America’s Children 2011 tells us children of color are behind on virtually every measure of child well-being. They face multiple risks that put them in grave danger of entering the pipeline to prison rather than the pipeline to college, productive employment and successful futures. Children of color are at increased risk of being born at low birth weight and with late or no prenatal care, living in poverty and extreme poverty, lacking family stability, facing greater health risks, lacking a quality education, being stuck in foster care without permanent families, ending up in the juvenile justice system, being caught in the college completion gap, being unemployed and being killed by guns. (Marian Wright Edelman, “A National Family Portrait,” HUFF POST—IMPACT, July 29, 2011.) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/a-national-family-portrait_b_913729.html

Among Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, a group often characterized as the “model minority,” there are also children at-risk. A 2008 report done at New York University expressed a common misconception: “Under the ‘model minority solution,’ Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are all lumped together as if they have the same traits: that they are all high-performing achievers. Indeed, there are exceptional Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who are extremely accomplished, and they are a source of pride and inspiration. But it is simply not true that they are typical.” (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—Facts, Not Fiction: Setting The Record Straight, The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) and The College Board, 2008, p. 2) http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/08-0608-AAPI.pdf

That report countered the monolithic “high-achieving Asian” stereotype, as it stated: “In reality, there are significant numbers of Asian American and
Pacific Islander students who struggle with poverty, who are English-language learners increasingly likely to leave school with rudimentary language skills, who are at risk of dropping out, joining gangs, and remaining on the margins of society, and who are subjected to violence and discrimination on account of race, class, gender, ethnicity, or language. In other words, the facts tell a dramatically different story.” (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—Facts, Not Fiction: Setting The Record Straight, The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education [CARE] and The College Board, 2008, p. 3)
http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/08-0608-AAPI.pdf

Further, a 2011 post by Allie Grasgreen for Inside Higher Ed noted that, according to higher ed officials, “... Asian students’ geographic region of origin can be a significant predictor of what type of college they’ll attend and whether they’ll succeed; and how the general public continues to wrongly believe that Asian students -- the “model minority” -- excel in all aspects in college.”

According to Grasgreen’s posting,

Yet overall rates of growth do not fairly represent the complexity of Asian demography and educational attainment. The U.S. Census Bureau has identified 48 different ethnic groups within the AAPI racial category, and some fare far less well than others. For example, about half of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students (such as Vietnamese and Native Hawaiian) will leave college without earning a degree; they are three to five times more likely to drop out than are East Asian (such as Japanese and Chinese) and South Asian (such as Korean and Indian) students.


Similarly, Jennifer Gonzalez, reporting in The Chronicle of Higher Education, noted that “In fact, nearly half of all Asian-American and Pacific Islander students, known as AAPI students, attend community colleges, and many of their ethnic groups have some of the lowest high-school-graduation and college-degree-attainment rates in the United States.” (Jennifer Gonzalez, “Asian-American and Pacific Islander Students Are Not Monolithically Successful, Report Says,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 27, 2011.)
http://chronicle.com/article/Asian-AmericanPacific/128061/

As Peter Sacks put it in an interview about his book Tearing Down the Gates: Confronting the Class Divide in American Education, “Instead of a system of equal educational opportunity, we are creating a system of educational haves and have-nots that increasingly is based upon birthright. Yes, a system based upon class origins.” (Scott Jaschik, “Tearing Down the Gates,” Inside Higher Ed, May 9, 2007.)

Princeton Historian Anthony Grafton cited the finding of economist Nancy Folbre that “of every 100 9th graders, 69 will graduate from high school
four years later. Only 39 will enter college, and only 27 of those will return for sophomore year. Of the original 100, no more than 18 will earn an associate degree within three years or a bachelor’s degree within six years.” (Anthony Grafton, “Admission madness,” The Daily Princetonian, March 7, 2011.)
http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2011/03/07/27853/

Furthermore, according to the 2011 report of the Children’s Defense Fund, statistics on college completion demonstrate a clear racial imbalance, as it stated:

White men ages 25 to 29 are almost twice as likely as Black men and almost two-and-a-half times more likely than Hispanic men to complete four or more years of college. White women are more than one-and-a-half times as likely as Black woman and more than two-and-a-half times as likely as Hispanic women to complete four or more years of college. (The State of America’s Children 2011, Children’s Defense Fund, July 18, 2011 p. H-26.) http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-of-americas-2011.pdf

Why?

1.2. “. . . The infamous achievement gap across racial and economic lines doesn’t start at kindergarten — it starts in the womb. We know that a baby’s development in the womb, which includes their brain functioning, can be severely impacted by the mother’s health, well-being, environment and socio-economic status. Babies experience and are impacted by joy and stress in utero! That’s why pregnant mothers today are encouraged to go to the doctor for prenatal checkups. They are also strongly dissuaded from drinking alcohol or smoking.”—Sondra Samuels, “Addressing the literacy gap in the Black community,” Everything’s Possible, March 16, 2011. http://www.spokesman-recorder.com/?p=2631

According to the American Council on Education (ACE), the rates of degree attainment vary widely according to the racial and ethnic category of students. As stated in its Minorities in Higher Education: 2009 Supplement:

As of 2007, 27.4 percent of young Americans aged 25 to 29 had obtained at least a bachelor’s degree, and an additional 8.1 percent had earned an associate degree. . . . These average rates conceal large disparities among subgroups. Asian Americans aged 25 to 29 are at the top, with 58 percent holding a bachelor’s degree, followed by whites (33 percent), African Americans (17 percent), Hispanics (11 percent) and finally, American Indians (9 percent). These large gaps are unlikely to change without reducing disparities at each transition point in the educational pipeline. (Mikyung Ryu, Minorities in Higher Education: 2009 Supplement—Twenty-Third Status Report, American Council on Education, September 2009, p. 1.)
In addition, a gender gap is also evident in the matriculation data; simply put, women are more likely to enroll in college than are men. And this gender gap varies by racial and ethnic classification. Per the ACE 2009 Supplement, “As with high school completion, gender gaps widened in college enrollment rates. The proportion of young women enrolled in college “increased from 30 percent to 45 percent between 1988 and 2007, an increase twice as large as for young men (30 percent to 37 percent). Of all racial/ethnic groups, African Americans and Hispanics showed the largest gender gap in college enrollment rates.” (Mikyung Ryu, Minorities in Higher Education: 2009 Supplement-- Twenty-Third Status Report, American Council on Education, September 2009, p. 2)

As Kevin Carey, policy director of the nonprofit Education Sector, stated in a recent posting, "All in all, this confirms what we already knew: College works well for the kind of student who has been going to college for a long time: white middle- and upper-class children of college graduates who enroll full-time directly after leaving high school." ("College Grad Rates Stay Exactly the Same," The Chronicle of Higher Education, December 2, 2010.)

By contrast, data on underrepresented U.S. students—including those of low income and minorities—continue to demonstrate their difficulty in going to college and in graduating. Indeed, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee professor Martin Haberman quoted Loeb (1999) as stating, “If you’re in the top economic quarter of the population, your children have a 76% chance of getting through college and graduating by age 24. . . . If you’re in the bottom quarter, however, the figure is 4%.” (“Urban Education: The State of Urban Schooling at the Start of 21st Century,” 7/12/2010.)

Anthony Cabrera, et al. examined the correlation of socioeconomic status (SES), matriculation, and graduation from college in their 2003 study for the U.S. Department of Education; they stated:

Our examination of the college paths followed by members of the 1982 High School Class shows Lowest-SES students are indeed more prone to follow at-risk paths. Only 30% of Lowest-SES students enter higher education at the 4-year sector, a trend in sharp contrast to the 67% participation rate exhibited by Highest-SES students. Slightly less than half of Lowest-SES students enroll on a continuous basis, while 71% of Highest-SES do. Forty-one percent of Lowest-SES students dropped, withdrew from, or left incomplete 10% or more of their college courses. This is in contrast to the 32% of Highest-SES students who engaged in
As for minorities, in the state of California among community college matriculants, journalist Joanne Jacobs posted that “only 26% of black students and 22% of Latino students had completed a degree or certificate or transferred after six years, compared to 37% of whites and 35% of Asian Pacific Islanders.” In her view, “Students fail because they’re not prepared for college-level reading, writing and math. Many are juggling jobs and family responsibilities too, of course, but college readiness is the make-or-break issue.” (“Unready and Unsuccessful,” by Joanne Jacobs, The Huffington Post, October 29, 2010. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joanne-jacobs/unready-and-unsuccessful_b_775668.html]

A report by The Education Trust West in April 2011 addressed this issue of college readiness in the Golden State, as it asked the question “How well are districts preparing students for college and career?” Its answer was not very positive, as it stated:

With California facing a shortage of almost one million college-educated workers by 2025, it is incumbent on state policymakers to ensure that all students exit high school prepared for college and career. However, too few students are graduating with the coursework needed to be eligible for admission to the state’s four-year public institutions. Statewide, only 35 percent of high school graduates completed the necessary A-G coursework in 2008-09, the most recent year for which we have data. The rates for traditionally underserved students were even worse: 27 percent of African-American students and 26 percent of Latino students graduated having completed the A-G course sequence. (Lindsey Stuart and Carrie Hahnel, A Report Card on District Achievement: How Low-income, African-American, and Latino Students Fare in California School Districts, The Education Trust – West, April 2011, p. 7.) [www.edtrustwest.org]

Cabrera and his fellow researchers examined the correlation of academic preparation and SES in community college; they described this link as follows:

We find that the level of academic resources among community college is moderately associated with SES. Lowest-SES students were less prepared. While 42% of Highest-SES students were highly academically prepared for college, merely 25% of Lowest-SES students enjoyed the same level of academic preparation. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 8.) [http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf]
Among matriculants to private colleges and universities, a graduation gap exists by race. In a posting on *The Hechinger Report*, Sarah Butrymowicz pointed out this information:

But a study released last summer by the Washington D.C.-based Education Trust, which analyzed data from 456 colleges and universities, found a disturbing gap in graduation rates when disaggregated by race. At private institutions, 73.4 percent of white students earned their degrees within six years, while only 54.7 percent of black students and 62.9 percent of Hispanic students made it through the schools they started. (“Can universities keep the minority students they woo? *The Hechinger Report*, February 23, 2011.)

1.3. “Yes, we need to fix American education. In particular, the inequalities Americans face at the starting line — bright children from poor families are less likely to finish college than much less able children of the affluent — aren’t just an outrage; they represent a huge waste of the nation’s human potential.”—Paul Krugman, “Degrees and Dollars,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 2011.

According to the 2009 Education Trust report, data on students from low-income families and underrepresented minorities at Access to Success Initiative (A2S) universities included in the various state systems of higher education systems were telling:

Only 26 percent of the students who earned bachelor’s degrees within six years in A2S systems came from low-income families, compared with 41 percent of 18-24 year-old high school graduates in these states. Only 22 percent of students who earned bachelor’s degrees within six years were underrepresented minorities, compared with 35 percent of 18-24 year-old high school graduates. (Jennifer Engle and Mary Lynch, *Charting a Necessary Path: The Baseline Report of the Access to Success Initiative*, The Education Trust, December 2009, p. 7.)

Bridget Terry Long, professor of economics and education at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, and consultant Erin Riley highlighted the correlates of family income and race with matriculation and graduation. As they summarized the data:
Unfortunately, the likelihood of attending college varies substantially by family income. Among high school graduates in 2004, only 43 percent of students from families who made less than $30,000 immediately entered a postsecondary institution. In contrast, 75 percent of students from families who made more than $50,000 did so. Even after accounting for differences in academic preparation and achievement, substantial gaps in college access still exist by income level. Low-income high school graduates in the top academic quartile attended college only at the same rate as high-income high school graduates in the bottom quartile of achievement (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance [ACSFA], 2001). (Bridget Terry Long and Erin Riley, “Financial Aid: A Broken Bridge to College Access?” Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 77 No. 1, Spring 2007, p. 40.) (http://www.hepg.org/document/19/).

Focusing on the difference in graduation rates for students from different income and racial groups, Professor Long and Riley commented on their persistence toward completion, citing these statistics:

For those who matriculate, the likelihood of persisting to a college degree also differs greatly by income. Only 36 percent of low-income students who were college qualified completed a bachelor's degree within eight years, while 81 percent of high-income students did so (Adelman, 2006). Stark differences also exist by race. Graduation rates at four-year institutions among first-time, full-time, degree-seeking undergraduates were highest for Asian/Pacific Islander students (65%), followed by White, non-Hispanic students (58%), for cohorts entering in the fall of 1998. Black and Hispanic students in this cohort graduated at much lower rates (40% and 46%, respectively). (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Whitmore, 2006 in Bridget Terry Long and Erin Riley, “Financial Aid: A Broken Bridge to College Access?” Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 77 No. 1, Spring 2007, p. 40.) (http://www.hepg.org/document/19/)

Kevin Carey, in a 2005 report for the Education Trust, noted on-time (i.e., within 6 years) completion rates for Black and Hispanic students, as follows:

While less than 57 percent of new students at four-year campuses get a degree from their first institution within six years, the graduation rate is below 50 percent for African-American and Latino students. These are the most academically prepared minority students our education system produces, and yet when they go to college, they are not likely to get their degree on time. [emphasis added] (One Step from the Finish Line: Higher College Graduation Rates are Within Our Reach, The Education Trust, January 2005, p. 2.)

The singer and philanthropist John Legend expressed this issue starkly in his recent blog post: “...I consider the education ‘achievement gap’ between those students who are receiving a quality education and those who are not the civil rights issue of our time. It is fundamentally unfair that Americans’ educational opportunities are so heavily influenced by the conditions outside of their control.” (John Legend, “Education Reform: The Civil Rights Issue of Our Time,” The Huffington Post, January 18, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-legend/education-reform-the-civi_b_426490.html)

President Obama echoed this view, speaking in New York City on April 6, 2011; according to a reporter’s account, “Describing education and education equality as the ‘civil rights issue of our time,’ President Obama called Wednesday for a renewed effort to eliminate the achievement gap between African-American students and others.” (Helene Cooper, “Obama Takes Aim at Inequality in Education,” The New York Times, April 6, 2011.) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/us/politics/07obama.html?_r=1&src=tptw

In his now classic book, writer Jonathan Kozol opined that “Poor people do not need to be reminded that the contest is unfair.” Citing the perception of kids, he quoted Elizabeth, “... a friend of mine who lives in a black neighborhood of Boston as saying ‘My children know very well the system is unfair. ... They see it as a message: ‘This is to tell you that you don’t much matter.’” (Jonathan Kozol, Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools, New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991, pp. 178-179.)

Ironically, some in the U.S. believe minorities have an edge when it comes to college access—indeed, they believe the odds are not stacked against them but for them. As education writer Peter Schmidt commented on his analysis of research done by Brian Powell and others at Indiana University at Bloomington, “On the whole, Americans see minority students as having much greater advantages in seeking access to college than is actually the case, although white people are much more likely than black and Hispanic segments of the population to hold such a view.” (Peter Schmidt, “Views of Who Can Attend College Are Deeply Divided by Race, With Some Seeing Middle Class as Worst Off,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 4, 2011.) http://chronicle.com/article/Views-of-Who-Can-Attend/127013/

Chapter 2: How may a child’s family background correlate with their access to college?

What accounts for this unequal access to higher education and graduation? Many observers begin by examining children’s experiences in the family—specifically, the family is often viewed as the child’s “first school.” A recent study that examined the correlation between families and access stated the following:

Using longitudinal data, we analyze disparities in family background and potentially influential investments parents make (or are constrained from making) early and late in the high school experience, and then how the patterns uncovered shape the likelihood of college attendance. Findings confirm expectations. Specifically, racial inequalities in class background shape disparities in cultural, monetary, and parental interactional investments, with strong consequences for high school attainment/achievement. Background inequalities, and their implications for early and later family investments and achievement/attainment, explain the entire black-white gap in the likelihood of college attendance. (Camille Z. Charles, Vincent J. Roscigno, and Kimberly C. Torres, “Racial inequality and college attendance: The mediating role of parental investments,” in Social Science Research 36, 2007, p. 329.)

That same study also commented on the importance of SES (financial and educational status) of families for students; it concluded:

This literature suggests that household socioeconomic status (SES)—usually measured as parental income and/or education—is critically important for achievement (Alexander et al., 1987; Lareau, 1989; Mehan, 1992; Parcel and Meneghan, 1994.) Lareau (1989) suggests that this effect is partially a function of less disposable income and time for working class parents to intervene in their children’s schooling. Middle- and upper-class parents, in contrast, can invest in household educational resources, can hire tutors, are more likely to utilize ‘proper’ English in the household, and have time to meet with teachers. (Camille Z. Charles, Vincent J. Roscigno, and Kimberly C. Torres, “Racial inequality and college attendance: The mediating role of parental investments,” in Social Science Research 36, 2007, p. 331.)

Further, these authors emphasized the importance of “cultural capital”—according to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, those “cultural habits and . . . dispositions inherited from” the family—which can help children to succeed. (from Elliot B. Weininger and Annette Lareau, “Cultural Capital,” p. 1)
http://www.brockport.edu/sociology/faculty/Cultural_Capital.pdf

Of this process involving socioeconomic status and cultural capital, Charles, Roscigno, and Torres say the following: “Higher
SES parents likewise can more easily transmit cultural capital to their children: ‘high brow’ European cultural attributes, typically held in high regard in the classroom and, therefore, conducive to educational success (Bourdieu, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Roscigno and Ainsworth Darnell, 1999.)” (Charles, et. al., p. 331.)

In his recent online profile for The New York Times of Ronald Ferguson, Director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard, reporter Michael Winerip observed the following about Ferguson’s findings on SES, race, and the achievement gap:

His research indicates that half the gap can be predicted by economics: even in a typical wealthy suburb, blacks are not as well-to-do; 79 percent are in the bottom 50 percent financially, while 73 percent of whites are in the top 50 percent. The other half of the gap, he has calculated, is that black parents on average are not as academically oriented in raising their children as whites. In a wealthy suburb he surveyed, 40 percent of blacks owned 100 or more books, compared with 80 percent of whites. In first grade, the percentage of black and white parents reading to their children daily was about the same; by fifth grade, 60 percent to 70 percent of whites still read daily to their children, compared with 30 percent to 40 percent of blacks. (Michael Winerip, Closing the Achievement Gap Without Widening a Racial One,” The New York Times, February 13, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/14/education/14winerip.html?pagewanted=1&R=1&hpw

As for the potentially-controversial topic of the effects of home environment by race, “. . . Ferguson said that talking about racial differences in parenting is a social taboo and an obstacle that he often faces.” As he put it in a recent interview:

People don't want to talk about it because they're afraid what is said will be misused," he said. "They're afraid that people will say it's their own fault, that members of low-achieving groups need to fix themselves. They're afraid that people will misuse information in bigoted ways. But if we can't have the conversation about things that we need to do differently, then we can't get around to actually doing them differently, he said. (Amelia Quinn, “Harvard lecturer spearheads movement to improve American education,” The Tufts Daily, March 2, 2011.)

Ferguson’s view—again, controversial—was then quoted to be as follows: "If we can give . . . the opportunities and help people from less advantaged

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backgrounds to spend more time in ways that contribute to their academic growth, in a few decades from now, we can get to a place where we’re much more equal than we are now,” he said. "But to do that, we’ve got to lay everything out on the table and work it through.” (Amelia Quinn, “Harvard lecturer spearheads movement to improve American education,” The Tufts Daily, March 2, 2011.)


2.2. “A tragic crisis of enormous magnitude is facing black boys and men in America. Parental neglect, racial discrimination and an orgy of self-destructive behavior have left an extraordinary portion of the black male population in an ever-deepening pit of social and economic degradation . . . . More than 70 percent of black children are born to unwed mothers. And I’ve been hearing more and more lately from community leaders in poor areas that moms are absent for one reason or another and the children are being raised by a grandparent or some other relative—or they end up in foster care.”--Bob Herbert, “Too Long Ignored,” The New York Times, August 21, 2010, p. A17.

The entertainer Bill Cosby, the first African American to win an Emmy Award, spoke in Maumee, OH on March 18, 2011, to the Greater Toledo Urban League dinner. According to the Associated Press account of Cosby’s remarks to the 750 people who attended, “He told the audience he’s ‘tired of children raising themselves’ and others doing nothing about it.” (“Bill Cosby visits Ohio, urges community responsibility,” The Vindicator, March 20, 2011, p. A6.)

Furthermore, observations on whether a child’s family background affects access are not confined to those typically viewed as being on the left of the political spectrum. In his online posting of August 29, 2010, “For black children, daunting divides in achievement and family life,” conservative Washington Post op-ed columnist George Will highlighted the importance of families on many facets of children’s lives.


Will commented, too, on the relationship of social class and the number of words children hear at home; he observed that “Black children also are disproportionately handicapped by this class-based disparity: By age 4, the average child in a professional family hears about 20 million more words than the average child in a working-class family and about 35 million more than the

The columnist again cites the ETS report on overcoming the achievement gap, relating families to this issue: “It is very hard to imagine progress resuming in reducing the education attainment and achievement gap without turning these family trends around — i.e., increasing marriage rates, and getting fathers back into the business of nurturing children.” (George Will, “For black children, daunting divides in achievement and family life,” August 29, 2010.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/27/AR2010082703805.html?nav=rss_opinion/columns

He ends his column by pointing out the observation of ETS researchers Barton and Coley in their work America’s Smallest School: The Family. Will indicated their assessment “... that about 90 percent of the difference in schools’ proficiencies can be explained by five factors: the number of days students are absent from school, the number of hours students spend watching television, the number of pages read for homework, the quantity and quality of reading material in the students’ homes — and, much the most important, the presence of two parents in the home.” (George Will, “For black children, daunting divides in achievement and family life,” August 29, 2010.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/27/AR2010082703805.html?nav=rss_opinion/columns

Is George Will correct that a student’s chances in life are all but determined by the family into which he or she was born? (George Will, “For black children, daunting divides in achievement and family life,” August 29, 2010.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/27/AR2010082703805.html?nav=rss_opinion/columns

Chapter 3: Research on learning in early childhood

“Ferguson also noted that the gap develops rapidly as young minority students approach kindergarten. Though there is ‘not much of a gap’ around the first birthday, a divergence in test scores is already apparent by age three, he said.” —Ronald F. Ferguson, director of Harvard’s Achievement Gap Initiative, quoted in Rediet T. Abebe, “Panel Discusses Education Gap,” The Harvard Crimson, February 24, 2011. http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/2/24/gap-achievement-ferguson-students/

Some indicate the odds begin stacking in a child’s first years. Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children’s Defense Fund, put it this way:
We know that between birth and age five, children learn social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills that set the foundation for academic success. Factors including poverty and the ‘lottery of geography’ create barriers to young children’s healthy development. Cognitive gaps emerge between children from families with low and higher incomes as early as nine months, and more often than not, these children are unable to catch up by the time they enter kindergarten. The resulting achievement gap increases over time and often propels children into the cradle to prison pipeline – especially if they are poor children of color. (Marian Wright Edelman, “Getting Children Ready For School,” HUFF POST—IMPACT, August 12, 2011.) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/getting-children-ready-for_b_925658.html]

A discussion of this phenomenon was done by then editor Paul Tough in a seminal—and provocative—article entitled “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” in The New York Times Magazine of November 26, 2006. In that synthesis of research, condensed into but a few pages, the native Canadian cited a number of studies—and seemed to connect their dots. First, was research on language acquisition, published by University of Kansas child psychologists Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley in 1995 on 42 Kansas City families with newborns. For three years, these two researchers “. . . visited each family once a month, recording absolutely everything that occurred between the child and the parent or parents.” (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 47.)

According to Tough, the researchers learned the following about the development of children’s vocabulary and the social class of their home:

. . . First, that vocabulary growth differed sharply by class and that the gap between the classes opened early. By age 3, children whose parents were professionals had vocabularies of about 1,100 words, and children whose parents were on welfare had vocabularies of about 525 words. The children’s I.Q.’s correlated closely to their vocabularies. The average I.Q. among the professional children was 117, and the welfare children had an average I.Q. of 79. (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 47.)

As for the reason for those differences, the writer cited Hart and Risley’s finding on vocabulary and parents’ speaking, according to their class, as follows:

By comparing the vocabulary scores with their observations of each child’s home life, they were able to conclude that the size of each child’s vocabulary correlated most closely to one simple factor: the number of words the parents spoke to the child [emphasis added.] That varied
greatly across the homes they visited, and again, it varied by class. In
the professional homes, parents directed an average of 487 ‘utterances’—
anything from a one-word command to a full soliloquy—to their children
each hour. In welfare homes, the children heard 178 utterances per
hour. (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor
children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?”

Not only did the number of “utterances” vary in homes by class,
according to Tough, so, too, did “the kinds of words and statements that
children heard varied by class.” As he put it:

*The most basic difference was in the number of ‘discouragements’ a
child heard—prohibitions and words of disapproval—compared with
the number of encouragements, or words of praise and approval*
[emphasis added.] By age 3, the average child of a professional
heard about 500,000 encouragements and 80,000
discouragements. For the welfare children, the situation was
reversed: they heard, on average, about 75,000 encouragements
and 200,000 discouragements. Hart and Risley found that as the
number of words a child heard increased, the complexity of that
language increased as well. (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a
Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help
48.)

As for the “payoff” to children regarding the way they were spoken to,
Tough noted these findings of the Kansas researchers:

*Hart and Risley showed that language exposure in early childhood
correlated strongly with I.Q. and academic success later on in a child’s life*
[emphasis added.] Hearing fewer words, and a lot of prohibitions and
discouragements, had a negative effect on I.Q.; hearing lots of words, and
more affirmations and complex sentences, had a positive effect on I.Q.
The professional parents were giving their children an advantage with
every word they spoke, and the advantage just kept building up. (Paul
Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act
more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York
Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 48.)

Hart and Risley summarized their research as indicating the following
about children and language experience in their families:

Our data showed that the magnitude of children’s accomplishments
depends less on the material and educational advantages available in the
home and more on the amount of experience children accumulate with
parenting that provides language diversity, affirmative feedback,
symbolic emphasis, gentle guidance, and responsiveness. *By the time
children are 3 years old, even intensive intervention cannot make up for*
the differences in the amount of such experience children have received from their parents. If children could be given better parenting, intervention might be unnecessary. [emphasis added] (Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children, Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1995, p. 210.)

Other research summarized by the Times’ reporter was from a team led by Columbia professor Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, who, in Tough’s description, “. . . has overseen hundreds of interviews of parents and collected thousands of hours of videotape of parents and children, and she and her research team have graded each one on a variety of scales.” According to him, they concluded the following in regard to parental attitudes, “child-rearing style,” and kids’ preparation for school:

Children from more well-off homes tend to experience parental attitudes that are more sensitive, more encouraging, less intrusive and less detached—all of which, they found, serves to increase I.Q. and school readiness [emphasis added.] They analyzed the data to see if there was something else going on in middle-class homes that could account for the advantage but found that while wealth does matter, child-rearing style matters more. (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 48.)

Tough continued his survey of research on early childhood learning by citing the work of Martha Farah, from the University of Pennsylvania, who, he said, employed neuroscience to investigate parental behaviors and kids’ memory skills; according to him, Farah

. . . has built on Brooks-Gunn’s work, using the tools of neuroscience to calculate exactly which skills poorer children lack and which parental behaviors affect the development of those skills. She has found, for instance, that the ‘parental nurturance’ that middle-class parents, on average, are more likely to provide stimulates the brain’s medial temporal lobe, which in turn aids the development of memory skills [emphasis added.] (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 48.)

The writer for the Times also described the anthropological research of Annette Lareau, who looked at the culture of early childhood, involving parents’ “cultivation” of their children. As Tough summarized:

Over the course of several years, Lareau and her research assistants observed a variety of families from different class backgrounds, basically moving into in to each home for three weeks of intensive scrutiny. Lareau found that the middle-class families she studied followed a similar strategy, which she labeled concerted cultivation. The parents in these
families engaged their children in conversation as equals, treating them like apprentice adults and encouraging them to ask questions, challenge assumptions and negotiate rules. They planned and scheduled countless activities to enhance their children’s development—piano lessons, soccer games, trips to the museum. [emphasis added] (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 49.)

Tough described Lareau’s findings on family behavior, according to social class, as follows:

The working-class and poor families Lareau studied did things differently. In fact, they raised their children the way most parents, even middle-class parents, did a generation or two ago. They allowed their children much more freedom to fill in their afternoons and weekends as they chose. . . but much less freedom to talk back, question authority or haggle over rules and consequences. Children were instructed to defer to adults and treat them with respect. This strategy Lareau named accomplishment of natural growth. [emphasis in original] (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 49.)

The reporter related Lareau’s research to the cultural attitudes and behavior children develop, according to their social class. As he stated it:

In public life, the qualities that middle-class children develop are consistently valued over the ones that poor and working-class children develop. Middle-class children become used to adults taking their concerns seriously, and so they grow up with a sense of entitlement, which gives them a confidence, in the classroom and elsewhere, that less-wealthy children lack. The cultural differences translate into a distinct advantage for middle-class children in school, on standardized achievement tests and, later in life, in the workplace. (Paul Tough, “What It Takes To Make a Student: Can teaching poor children to act more like middle-class children help close the education gap?” The New York Times Magazine, November 26, 2006, p. 49.)

As for the assets some children will possess compared to others, Tough characterized them in this way:

But the real advantage that middle-class children gain come from more elusive processes: the language that their parents use, the attitudes toward life that they convey. However you measure child-rearing, middle-class parents tend to do it differently than poor parents—and the path they follow in turn tends to give their children an array of advantages. [emphasis added] As Lareau points out, kids from poor families might be nicer, they might be happier, they might be more polite—but in countless ways, the manner in which they are raised puts them at a disadvantage


Writing more recently about a study of 750 pairs of identical and fraternal twins tested on mental ability at 10 months and 2 years of age done by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Virginia, columnist Jonah Lehrer underscored the importance of early learning as follows:

When it came to the mental ability of 10-month-olds, the home environment was the key variable, across every socioeconomic class. But results for the 2-year-olds were dramatically different. In children from poorer households, the choices still mattered. *In fact, the researchers estimated that the home environment accounted for approximately 80% of the individual variance in mental ability among poor 2-year-olds. The effect of genetics was negligible.* [emphasis added] (Jonah Lehrer, “Why Rich Parents Don’t Matter,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 22-23, 2011, p. C12.)

**Chapter 4: More views on learning**

“What keeps me up at night is the historic lack of urgency, the acceptance of the status quo. We need to change. Anyone who is defending the status quo is part of the problem.” (Star-Ledger Editorial Board, “A Q&A with ... Arne Duncan: The eyes of America are on Newark’s school reform,” *NJ.com*, April 3, 2011.)

[http://blog.nj.com/perspective/2011/04/a_qa_with_arne_duncan_the_eyes.html](http://blog.nj.com/perspective/2011/04/a_qa_with_arne_duncan_the_eyes.html)

The University of Chicago researcher Benjamin Bloom, who edited the classic work *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals—Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1956) and was later recognized as an authority on mastery learning, succinctly expressed his view on learning: “It is the history of the individual learner which in large part determines his present learning, and it is this accumulated history (past and present) which will have major consequences for his future learning.” (Benjamin S. Bloom, *Human Characteristics and School Learning*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976, p. 202.)

Bloom elaborated on his view of learners in this way:
The central thesis of this book is that variations in learning and the level of learning of students are determined by the students’ learning history and the quality of instruction they receive. Appropriate modifications related to the history of the learners and the quality of instruction can sharply reduce the variation of students and greatly increase their level of learning and their effectiveness in learning in terms of time and effort expended. (Benjamin S. Bloom, *Human Characteristics and School Learning*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976, p. 16.)

Based on his own research and that of others, Benjamin Bloom was clear as to the impact of early home environment on children’s learning—and the obligation of schools in this regard. He stated:

All later learning is likely to be influenced by the very basic learning which has taken place by the age of five or six. If the intellective training of the child cannot be done adequately by the home and by the parents, it is the responsibility of the schools to ensure that the culturally deprived children have as good a set of initial skills and intellectual development as children from more culturally advantaged homes. (Benjamin S. Bloom, *All Our Children Learning: A Primer for Parents, Teachers, and Other Educators*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981, p. 80.)

The importance of the home and a family on the achievement of children was famously observed by another in the pantheon of researchers on education, Johns Hopkins sociologist James S. Coleman, who stated:

Taking all these results together, one implication stands out above all. That schools bring little influence to bear on a child’s achievement that is independent of his background and general social context; and that this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. [emphasis added] For equality of educational opportunity through the schools must imply a strong effect of schools that is independent of the child’s immediate social environment, and that strong independent effect is not present in American schools. (James S. Coleman, “Equality of Educational Opportunity,” in *Equality and Achievement in Education*, ed. Marta Tienda and David B. Grusky, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990, p. 119 in Peter Sacks, *Tearing Down the Gates: Confronting the Class Divide in American Education*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007, p. 15.)

Richard Rothstein, former national education columnist for *The New York Times* and visiting lecturer at Teachers College, Columbia University, commented on Coleman’s findings, in light of later research: “Nonetheless, scholarly efforts over four decades have consistently confirmed Coleman’s core finding; no analyst has been [able?] to attribute less than two-thirds of the variation in achievement among schools to the family characteristics of their students.” (Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational*

And should we be surprised—if for no other reason than simply the time students spend at school versus at home? Education researcher David Berliner cited the statistic that “U.S. students spend about 1,150 waking hours a year in school versus about 4,700 more waking hours per year in their families and neighborhoods.” (David C. Berliner, Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success, Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC), March 2009, p. 3.) http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/PB-Berliner-NON-SCHOOL.pdf

Indeed, per Berliner, schools aren’t the genesis of children’s inequality; he stated the following in regard to out-of-school factors (OSFs):

First, studies of school-age children during the school year and over their summer break strongly suggest that most of the inequality in cognitive skills and differences in behavior come from family and neighborhood sources rather than from schools. The research evidence is quite persuasive that schools actually tend to reduce the inequality generated by OSFs and have the potential to offer much greater reductions.

Second, despite their best efforts at reducing inequalities, inequalities do not easily go away, with the result that America’s schools generally work less well for impoverished youth and much better for those more fortunate. (David C. Berliner, Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success, Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC), March 2009, p. 4.) http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/PB-Berliner-NON-SCHOOL.pdf

In conclusion, David Berliner opined regarding the likelihood of an emphasis on schools alone—as opposed to also targeting OSFs—in closing achievement gaps, noting the following: “All this strongly suggests that a good portion of the achievement gaps that have become the focus of U. S. educational policy is caused by OSFs, and schools, as they are ordinarily configured, are not in a position to eliminate those gaps.” (David C. Berliner, Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success, Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC), March 2009, p. 39.) http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/PB-Berliner-NON-SCHOOL.pdf

In a similar vein, Richard Rothstein compiled a list of “the many ways in which social class differences prepare children differently to learn.” As he summarized:

These differences appear not only in how families can support children from current income, but also in how families support children from other economic resources like savings for college, home equity, or access to stable rental housing; in their varied childrearing philosophies, conversational styles, literacy practices, role modeling, and parental social networks; in children’s health that impacts learning, with differences in vision, hearing, dental care, lead poisoning, asthma,
immunizations, birth weight and maternal smoking and alcohol use; in the ethnically and racially patterned cultural expectations about the payoff to education; and in the athletic and other enriching experiences that children enjoy in the afterschool hours, and in the summer. (Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*, New York: Teachers College Economic Policy Institute, 2004, p. 61.)

Rothstein concluded that “each of these contributes only a tiny bit to the learning gap between lower-class and middle-class children, but combined, the effects could be huge, and it is hard to see how even the greatest schools could overcome them.” (Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*, New York: Teachers College Economic Policy Institute, 2004, p. 61.)


http://www.tennessean.com/article/20110724/OPINION03/307240042/Action-steps-can-close-racial-gap

Stephen Krashen, professor emeritus at the University of Southern California and researcher/author on literacy and language acquisition, emphasized the role of poverty in children’s learning; he summarized that impact, as follows:

Decades of research confirm that poverty has a huge impact on student learning. Many studies show that more poverty means lower scores on all measures of school achievement. There are also many studies that show us just how poverty negatively impacts school performance. Here are the results, in brief:

- Children of poverty are more likely to suffer from "food insecurity," which means slower language development, and behavioral problems.
- High-poverty families are more likely to lack medical insurance or have high co-payments, which means less medical care, and more childhood illness and absenteeism, which of course negatively impacts school achievement. School is not helping: Poor schools are more likely to have no school nurse or have a high ratio of nurses to students.
- Children of poverty are more likely to live in high-pollution areas, with more exposure to mercury, lead, PCB’s (polychlorinated biphenyls) and
smog, all of which impact health and learning, and often impact behavior as well.

- Children of poverty also have very little access to books at home and in their communities, with less access to good public libraries and bookstores. Once again, school is not helping: Children of poverty attend schools with poorly supported classroom libraries and school libraries. Studies confirm that less access to books means lower reading achievement, which makes sense in view of findings that show that self-selected reading is a powerful predictor of reading achievement. (Stephen Krashen, “Children need food, health care, and books. Not new standards and tests,” Education Week Teacher: Living in Dialogue, May 10, 2010.)


E.D. Hirsch, Jr., controversial educator, writer, and founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation, addressed the Virginia House of Delegates following his retirement from the University of Virginia and explained his views on learning; as Hirsch remarked: “The great educational researcher Harold Stevenson pointed out that the chief diversity of American students is not race or ethnicity or social class but diversity of academic preparation.” (Speech by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. to Virginia House of Delegates, Richmond, VA, Feb 15, 2011, p. 3.)

Hirsch emphasized his belief in the importance of verbal facility for success in American society, stating:

> The persistent achievement gap between haves and have-nots in our society is chiefly a verbal gap. There is no greater practical attainment in the modern world than acquiring a bellyful of words. A large vocabulary is the single most reliable predictor of practical, real-world competence, as we know from our military’s correlation of job performance with scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test . . . . Another set of studies based on this same Armed-Forces test is called the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. The survey follows the life paths of young people over the years, and it finds that that vocabulary size predicts income. One standard-deviation improvement on the AFQT test will yield an 18 percent rise in salary in all areas of work. . . . (Speech by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. to Virginia House of Delegates, Richmond, VA, Feb 15, 2011, p. 5.)

Hirsch also suggested what he termed “The Matthew Effect,” from The Bible. He explained this concept in learning as follows:

> The first principle is encapsulated in the term ‘The Matthew Effect,’ alluding to Matthew, Chapter 29, verse 25 which goes: ‘For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.’ The Matthew Effect tells us that those who already have enough knowledge and vocabulary to understand what the teacher or textbook is saying will gain more knowledge and vocabulary, while those who lack these pre-
requisites of comprehension will fall ever further behind . . . . If we make sure, starting in the earliest grades, that all the students in a classroom have the pre-requisite knowledge and language to understand what is being said, then to them also shall be given, and they shall have abundance. (Speech by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. to Virginia House of Delegates, Richmond, VA, Feb 15, 2011, p. 5.)

Then, Hirsh explained what he regarded as the mutually-reinforcing relationship between knowledge and language. According to Hirsh,

The Matthew Effect is explained by the reciprocity between knowledge and language. Language is the chief means for enhancing knowledge, and knowledge is the chief means for enhancing language, and the two acquisitions continue to reinforce each other and build over time. Those who have relevant knowledge can gain more language, and those who have relevant language can gain more knowledge. For the past half-century psychologists have stressed the critical importance of prior relevant knowledge in comprehending language. (Speech by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. to Virginia House of Delegates, Richmond, VA, Feb 15, 2011, pp. 5-6.)

James J. Heckman, Nobel Laureate in the department of economics at the University of Chicago, framed the issue of the achievement gap as a “skill gap.” As he wrote in the abstract for his recent study: “In contemporary America, racial gaps in achievement are primarily due to gaps in skills. Skill gaps emerge early before children enter school. Families are major producers of those skills.” (James J. Heckman, “The American Family in Black and White: A Post-Racial Strategy for Improving Skills to Promote Equality,” IZA DP No. 5495, February 2011, p. 2.)

Heckman then echoed the view of James Coleman regarding the impact of schools on children, stating “Inequality in performance in school is strongly linked to inequality in family environments. Schools do little to reduce or enlarge the gaps in skills that are present when children enter school.” (James J. Heckman, “The American Family in Black and White: A Post-Racial Strategy for Improving Skills to Promote Equality,” IZA DP No. 5495, February 2011, p. 2.)

The Chicago economist emphasized the importance of parenting in the development of skills and categorized some families as “dysfunctional.” As he stated, “Parenting matters, and the true measure of child advantage and disadvantage is the quality of parenting received. A growing fraction of American children across all race and ethnic groups is being raised in dysfunctional families.” (James J. Heckman, “The American Family in Black and White: A Post-Racial Strategy for Improving Skills to Promote Equality,” IZA DP No. 5495, February 2011, p. 2.)

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Finally, Heckman addressed policy questions in the United States regarding the optimum time to provide intervention, opining the following:

Investment in the early lives of children in disadvantaged families will help close achievement gaps. America currently relies too much on schools and adolescent remediation strategies to solve problems that start in the preschool years. Policy should prevent rather than remediate. Voluntary, culturally sensitive support for parenting is a politically and economically palatable strategy that addresses problems common to all racial and ethnic groups. (James J. Heckman, “The American Family in Black and White: A Post-Racial Strategy for Improving Skills to Promote Equality,” IZA DP No. 5495, February 2011, p. 2.) http://ftp.iza.org/dp5495.pdf

5. What about the guys?

According to the 2010 figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, females 18 years and older have earned more bachelor's degrees than males, with rounded totals of 21,528,000 to 19,762,000. Furthermore, women’s 4-year degree attainment exceeds men’s in every 5-year age category until 60-64. Women have also earned more associate’s degrees (occupational and academic) and master’s degrees; it is not until the level of professional and doctoral degrees that male totals exceed those of females.  (All Races, Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2010, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.) http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2010/tables.html

The 2010 Met Life Teacher Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive in the fall of 2010 on a national sample “... of middle and high school teachers, students, parents of public school students, and business executives from Fortune 1000 companies ...” indicated a gender gap regarding students’ desire to access college; indeed, the Survey found the following:

In high school, a gender gap in college expectations emerges that does not exist in middle school. [emphasis in original] In middle school, seven in ten girls (73%) and boys (72%) plan to get at least a bachelor’s degree. However, in high school, the number of girls planning to get a college degree increases to 83%, while the number of boys planning to get a college degree remains the same as the middle school number.  (The Met Life Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, Part 1: Clearing the Path, Fall 2010, p. 9.) http://www.metrife.com/assets/cao/contributions/foundation/american-teacher/MetLife_Teacher_Survey_2010.pdf

A *Time* article by David Von Drehle discussed the performance of boys in the U.S.; the author indicated lower male performance, as related to college access and success. As he put it: “Meanwhile, fewer boys than girls take the SAT. Fewer boys than girls apply to college. Fewer boys than girls, in annual
surveys of college freshmen, express a passion for learning. And fewer boys than girls are earning college degrees.” (David Von Drehle, “The Myth About Boys,” *Time*, August 6, 2007, p. 42.)

http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1647452,00.html

Von Drehle elaborated on the situation of young males in the U.S.—based on a report of the federal government, entitled *America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2007*—as follows:

Statistics collected over two decades show an alarming decline in the performance of America’s boys—in some respects, a virtual free fall. Boys were doing poorly in school, abusing drugs, committing violent crimes and engaging in promiscuous sex . . . . The standardized NAEP test, known as the nation’s report card, indicates that by the senior year of high school, boys have fallen nearly 20 points behind their female peers [in reading]. (David Von Drehle, “The Myth About Boys,” *Time*, August 6, 2007, pp. 43-44.)

http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1647452,00.html

According to his 2011 report *Economic Change Effects on Men*—and an interview with Sarah D. Sparks—Tom Mortenson, at the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, found that “In 2010, 62.8 percent of young men who graduated from high school enrolled in college, up 7.6 percentage points from 1970, but far below the continuation rate for young women—74 percent in 2010, up 25.5 percentage points from 1970. ‘Each spring, the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts out its spring study on recent high school graduates, and I’ve been compiling that data since 1959,’ Mortenson told me. ‘The gap between males and females is now greater than 10 percentage points, and it’s never been that wide before’ favoring girls during his years of analysis.” (Sarah D. Sparks, “Report Points to Widening Gap in Boys’ Educational Attainment,” *Education Week: Inside School Research*, May 17, 2011.)


As for matriculation rates by gender, an online post commented on the U.S. Labor Department’s report regarding high school graduates in the Class of 2009. Although 70.1% of all students matriculated, the gender breakdown was 73.8% of females but only 66% of male graduates. (Sara Murray, “Grads Head to College In Record Numbers,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 28, 2010.)

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703832204575210244203411342.html

Regarding enrollment figures, based on the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 43.1% of undergrads from 2007-8 in the U.S. were men, while 56.9% were women. According to an online posting, “women outnumber men at colleges and universities, though their numbers are more even at more selective institutions. Community colleges, less-selective private colleges, and especially for-profit colleges are heavily female.” (“Who Are the Undergraduates?” *The
Chapter 6: Black Males--A Crisis

6.1. “Every dude wanna be da "hardest," every girl wanna be "the baddest bitch," okay, koo, tell me where u gon be in 10 years when u tryna make ends meet, no job, no future for yaself......U still wanna be "Hood??" I understand I got a lil bit in me, but I will NEVER go back to that mentality!!”—Jamal Fareed, posting on Facebook, March 7, 2011.

Rapper and hip-hop mogul Jay-Z said, regarding his song “American Dreamin,” that “our aim is the same as everyone, shooting for the American dream of success and wealth, but the target is a little different: Instead of trying to land in college or in a good job, I’m trying to get rich in the streets.” (Jay-Z, Decoded, New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010, p. 33.) As the entertainer put it, “but it’s just a rational response to the reality we faced. No one was going to help us. Not even our fathers stuck around.” (Jay-Z, Decoded, New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010, p. 86.)

Children’s Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman commented on the situation faced by young Black males, as she stated: “Our schools and communities are failing the 3.5 million Black boys under age nine in shocking ways. They face a toxic cocktail of poverty, illiteracy, racial disparities, violence, massive incarceration, and family breakdown. A Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime.” (Marian Wright Edelman, “Giving Black Boys a Strong Start,” HUFF POST—IMPACT, June 24, 2011.) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/giving-black-boys-a- stron_b_884270.html

Donna Ford had earlier studied variances in achievement between gifted Black males and female adolescents. Ford summarized those differences as follows:

Black males were more likely than females to be underachievers; they exerted considerably less effort in school and held more negative attitudes about school than females. They found school less relevant and personally meaningful than did their female counterparts. Further, Black males were more pessimistic about social factors than were Black females. For example, several of the early adolescent Black males spoke with anger and disappointment about the injustices Blacks must wrestle with. (Donna Y. Ford, Reversing Underachievement Among Gifted Black Students: Promising Practices and Programs, New York: Teachers College Press, 1996, p. 128.)
In October 2010, The Council of the Great City Schools issued its research report called *A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools*. In his preface, Executive Director of the Council Michael Casserly pulled no punches: “The nation’s young Black males are in a state of crisis. They do not have the same opportunities as their male or female counterparts across the country. . . . At almost every juncture, the odds are stacked against these young men in ways that result in too much unfulfilled potential and too many fractured lives.” *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. iii.)*


The report summarized the situation in which Black kids may find themselves as follows:

- In 2008, Black children ages 18 and under were three times more likely to live in single-parent households than White children.
- Nearly two-thirds of all Black children lived in a single-parent household. In 2007, one out of every three Black children lived in poverty compared with one out of every ten White children. *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 3.)*


Further, the report supported the summary statement with these facts that “Black males continue to perform lower than their peers throughout the country on almost every indicator”: *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 2.)*


- Between 2003 and 2009, the average reading scale of large city (LC) Black males was lower than the average score of White males in national public schools (NP) by at least 28 points at grade 4 and 29 points at grade 8. *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 3.)*


- In 2009, the average reading scale score of large city (LC) Black males who were *not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch* (Non-FRPL) was one point lower at grade 4 and seven points lower at grade 8 than the score of White males in national public schools (NP) who were *eligible for free or reduced-price lunch* (FRPL). *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 4.)*

In 2009, the average mathematics scale score of large city (LC) Black students in grade 4 and 8 was significantly lower than Hispanic students in large cities (LC). Both were lower than White students in national public schools (NP). *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 4.)*

As for the report’s “Factor 4: College and Career Preparedness,” Black males were, once again, found to be behind, as these data indicate:

- Black males were more likely, compared with White males, to drop out of high school and not graduate. Fewer Black males take Advanced Placement exams or enroll in two- or four-year colleges after graduation. Furthermore, the average SAT and ACT scores of Black males were lower than those of White males. *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 5.)*

- Three out of 10 Black males enrolled in a four-year institution, compared with four out of 10 White males. *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 5.)*

- Approximately 15 percent of Black males graduated in four years and about one-third graduated in five years compared with 33 percent of White males graduating in four years and one-half graduating in five years. *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 6.)*

Executive Director Casserly anticipated reaction to the report. As he stated:

This report is likely to make people angry, and it should. We hope that this is a louder and more jolting wake-up call to the nation than this country is used to hearing. The fact that the previous calls have fallen on so many deaf ears is not encouraging, but we are convinced that we must ring the alarms one more time and play a larger role in setting this situation right. He finished by saying this: ‘With so many of our citizens lacking access to the fruits of the richest nation on earth, our aspirations as a truly just nation are called into question.’ *(A Call For Change: The Social And Educational Factors Contributing To The Outcomes Of Black Males In Urban Schools, The Council of the Great City Schools, October 2010, p. 6.)*
To be sure, not everyone accepted the report’s findings; indeed, George E. Leonard, head administrator of Washington, D.C.’s Dunbar Senior High School, said “I’m not buying any of this” information in the council’s report. As he stated: “The study is false. It sends out some false indicators, and I would stand in the face of any educator and say that it is wrong.” In the view of Leonard, “It’s not due to an innate inability to learn. The way society views race affects the psyche of those students who are on the same playing field” as other students, he said. “We’re tired of being studied, tired of white America always trying to correlate innate abilities based on race.” Finally, Leonard commented on the reality of disparities in American education, saying “Once you accept it, understand it and are clear about it, it will put things in perspective so that you can rise above the racist regimes, the racist professors, to achieve and be successful.” (Jackie Jones, “Report Offers Dismal Stats on Black Boys,” BlackAmericaWeb.com, November 10, 2010.)

Similarly, Ivory A. Toldson, Editor-in-Chief of The Journal of Negro Education, vehemently criticized the report, saying “I do not question the motives of the Council of the Great City Schools, but I do unequivocally question the methods and the merits of the first 106 of 120 pages.” According to Toldson, “Culturally biased assessment practices and institutional racism continue to be at the core of the impending ‘national catastrophe’ so glibly forewarned by “A Call for Change.”” As he put it, “Incidentally, in the 120-page report, the words ‘cultural,’ ‘racism’ and ‘bias’ do not appear once; not even as a remote possibility for the racial differences they found.” Finally, Toldson states the following: “Concerns regarding Black males in education are real and pervasive, but we do not need to harvest negative propaganda to promote change. Overstated and unqualified deficit statistics have the unintended consequence of promoting Black inferiority.” (Ivory A. Toldson, “Editor’s Comment: The Happy Bell Curve: How Misguided Research on Race and Achievement is Duping Black Progressives and Liberal Americans into Accepting Black Inferiority,” The Journal of Negro Education, 2010, Vol. 79, No. 4, pp. 444-445.)

6.2. “Albert Taylor remembers seeing a Youngstown man blow marijuana smoke in the face of his child to make the child hungry because the boy was sick and did not want to eat. That the father felt it OK to blow marijuana in the direction of his child, who has sickle-cell anemia, demonstrates a difficulty young black people have in raising the next generation.”--John W. Goodwin Jr., “Youth and Violence,” The Vindicator, March 13, 2011, p. A1.)

In his article “Proficiency of Black Males Is Found to Be Far Lower Than Expected,” on the release of the report A Call for Change, reporter Trip Gabriel of The New York Times cited this striking fact:
Only 12 percent of black fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading, compared with 38 percent of white boys, and only 12 percent of black eighth-grade boys are proficient in math, compared with 44 percent of white boys. Poverty alone does not seem to explain the differences: poor white boys do just as well as African-American boys who do not live in poverty, measured by whether they qualify for subsidized school lunches. (Trip Gabriel, “Proficiency of Black Males Is Found to Be Far Lower Than Expected,” The New York Times, November 9, 2010.)


Further, Gabriel quoted a noted Harvard professor about early child-rearing, as follows: “There’s accumulating evidence that there are racial differences in what kids experience before the first day of kindergarten,” said Ronald Ferguson, director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard. “They have to do with a lot of sociological and historical forces. In order to address those, we have to be able to have conversations that people are unwilling to have.” Those include “conversations about early childhood parenting practices,” Dr. Ferguson said. “The activities that parents conduct with their 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds. How much we talk to them, the ways we talk to them, the ways we enforce discipline, the ways we encourage them to think and develop a sense of autonomy.” (Trip Gabriel, “Proficiency of Black Males Is Found to Be Far Lower Than Expected,” The New York Times, November 9, 2010)


Gabriel’s article was not without criticism. Indeed, Editor Ivory A. Toldson of The Journal of Negro Education wrote that it “. . . reflects a larger problem of deficit statistics being promoted and embraced among people who would have challenged its merits years ago.” (Ivory A. Toldson, “Editor’s Comment: The Happy Bell Curve: How Misguided Research on Race and Achievement is Duping Black Progressives and Liberal Americans into Accepting Black Inferiority,” The Journal of Negro Education, 2010, Vol. 79, No. 4, p. 443.)

6.3. Bob Herbert, former op-ed columnist for The New York Times, also commented on the report A Call for Change in his posting “This Raging Fire,” of November 15, 2010. As Herbert stated:

We know by now, of course, that the situation is grave. We know that more than a third of black children live in poverty; that more than 70 percent are born to unwed mothers; that by the time they reach their mid-30s, a majority of black men without a high school diploma has spent time in prison. We know all this, but no one seems to know how to turn things around. No one has been able to stop this steady plunge of young black Americans into a socioeconomic abyss. (Bob Herbert, “This Raging Fire,” The New York Times, November 15, 2010.)

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/16/opinion/16herbert.html?_r=1&hp
The columnist continued on the situation of Black youth: “Now comes a report from the Council of the Great City Schools that ought to grab the attention of anyone who cares about black youngsters, starting with those parents who have shortchanged their children on a scale so monstrous that it is difficult to fully grasp . . . .” (Bob Herbert, “This Raging Fire,” The New York Times, November 15, 2010.) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/16/opinion/16herbert.html?_r=1&hp

Herbert then linked the report to the current U.S. recession—and attitudes in our nation’s capital:

The terrible economic downturn has made it more difficult than ever to douse this raging fire that is consuming the life prospects of so many young blacks, and the growing sentiment in Washington is to do even less to help any Americans in need. It is inconceivable in this atmosphere that blacks themselves will not mobilize in a major way to save these young people. I see no other alternative. (Bob Herbert, “This Raging Fire,” The New York Times, November 15, 2010.) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/16/opinion/16herbert.html?_r=1&hp

The writer ended with this comment regarding what he terms “the black family”:

The first and most important step would be a major effort to begin knitting the black family back together. There is no way to overstate the myriad risks faced by children whose parents have effectively abandoned them. It’s the family that protects the child against ignorance and physical harm, that offers emotional security and the foundation for a strong sense of self, that enables a child to believe — truly — that wonderful things are possible. (Bob Herbert, “This Raging Fire,” The New York Times, November 15, 2010.) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/16/opinion/16herbert.html?_r=1&hp

6.4. “He says the biggest revelation he had reading his own autobiography came in the parts about his father, who abandoned the family when Jay was 11. ‘It was still wrong, at the end of the day, that he left.’ Jay says, ‘but he did stick around at a time when it wasn’t cool or popular—he married my mom at a time when guys were just leaving, and you’d never even meet your dad. So it made me ease up a little bit in how I felt about him.”--Mark Binelli, “King of America: From Coachella to the White House, How Jay-Z Runs the Game,” Rolling Stone, June 24, 2010, p. 47.

Dakarai Aarons also commented on the release of the report A Call for Change, which examined data from the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As he stated: “The council’s report suggests that the underperformance of black male youths is nothing short of a national emergency, and it calls for the convening of a White House conference.”
Aarons quoted Council Executive Director Michael Casserly from an interview as saying, "This is not just an education issue, and it is not just an urban issue. It is a broader national issue that is going to require sustained and coordinated effort on the part of a lot of people." (Dakarai Aarons, “Black Male Achievement in a 'State of Crisis,' Study Says,” Education Week, November 9, 2010.)

Chauntel Riser, coordinator of the African-American Resource Center at California State University Fullerton (CSUF), put it this way regarding Black males’ college completion: “So it’s not that they don’t want to, they just don’t know how to graduate . . . .” According to Christina Lunceford, assistant director of the Center for Research on Education Access and Leadership at CSUF, “We are in a crisis across the country especially with African-American males. There are not a lot of African-American males going to college and even fewer are graduating.” (Soyoung Kim, “Achievement Gap Persists in African-American Graduation Rates,” Neon Tommy, March 5, 2011.)

Regarding the graduation gap involving Black male college athletes, Lynn O'Shaughnessy offered a posting on the graduation rates of men’s basketball teams competing in the 2011 NCAA Tournament. She drew statistics from the annual report issued by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida and commented as follows: “The gap between white and African American players, however, grew by four percentage point[s] to 32%. Ninety one percent of white basketball players graduate, but only 59% of African-American basketball players graduate. Obviously, that’s unacceptable.” (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “2011 March Madness: Best and Worst Graduation Rates,” The College Solution: CBS Moneywatch, March 15, 2011.)

A similar view on Black male athletes’ postsecondary academic success was expressed by Tim Davis, professor at Wake Forest University School of Law, who stated: “But the fact remains that we are failing far too many of our African American athletes by depriving them of the college education that athletic scholarships were designed to provide.” (Tim Davis, “Losing to Win in College Sports,” HUFFPOST COLLEGE, April 13, 2011.)

By contrast, among participants on teams in the 2011 Women’s NCAA Basketball Tournament, the graduation gap was much smaller between the races, as “…92 percent of white players graduate, compared to 84 percent of black players, or a gap of just 8 percent.” (“Women’s NCAA Teams Outdo Men in Classroom,” The Huffington Post: College, March 16, 2011.)
Chapter 7: Latinos--Another Crisis

7.1. “Latino youth are all the more at risk of becoming disengaged from education and employment, due in large part to obstacles that can include learning disabilities, tenuous immigration status, language barriers, low income, pregnancy and parenting, lack of housing, involvement in the foster care system, and an overwhelming representation in the juvenile justice system.” (Ana Hageage, Plugged In: Positive Development Strategies for Disconnected Latino Youth—A Report of the NCLR Escalera Program, National Council of La Raza, 2011, p. 1.)

A posting by Peter Schmidt on the 2010 A Call For Change commented on data relating to Hispanics, saying “The latest report covers new ground, however, with a special section focusing on the nation's Hispanic population, which has the lowest rate of high-school completion and the lowest level of educational attainment of any minority group, and has made the least progress in recent decades in the growth of its share of young people going on to college . . . .” Schmidt commented further: “Unlike many other immigrants, most Hispanic immigrants, particularly those from Mexico, come from underachieving economic and educational backgrounds, the report notes.” (Peter Schmidt, “Educational Difficulties of Men and Immigrants Hinder Efforts to Improve College Attainment,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 20, 2010.)
http://chronicle.com/article/Educational-Difficulties-of/125015/

According to a post by writer Sarah D. Sparks, the achievement gap for Hispanics based on 2009 NAEP testing remained large. As she stated: “While growing numbers of Hispanic students have changed the face of American education over the past two decades, the gap between them and their white classmates in math and reading remains as wide as it was in the 1990s, according to a new federal study.” (Sarah D. Sparks, “Study Finds Gaps Remain Large for Hispanic Students,” Education Week, June 23, 2011.)
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/06/23/36hispanic.h30.html?tkn=RLXFYZDgaPE9%2FeB%2BY7N0V00rJS8syDT%2FIRG1&cmp=clp-edweek

Commenting on the same data, Kayla Webley blogged in Time that “A newly released report on student achievement finds that members of the nation’s second largest ethnic group are still woefully underperforming their white counterparts.” (Kayla Webley, “The Achievement Gap: Why Hispanic Students Are Still Behind,” Time, June 23, 2011.)
http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2079429,00.html
For itinerant farmworkers’ children—American citizens by virtue of their birth in the U.S.--whose families pick the produce crop, which involves moving frequently, their education can be disrupted. Patricia Leigh Brown described one such young male in this posting: “One boy in Mr. Ramos’s class did not attend school for five months. He spent his time on PlayStation. This year, his father will move for work. But his mother is staying in Salinas, worried, she said, that ‘my son is falling behind.’ Almost half of these children become high-school dropouts.” (Patricia Leigh Brown, “Itinerant Life Weighs on Farmworkers’ Children,” The New York Times, March 12, 2011.) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/us/13salinas.html?pagewanted=2&adxnnl=1&hpw&adxnnlx=1300104036-wFj/nGS5VdhLTnVazFb7Sw

As for Latino boys, a column by Raul Reyes in USA Today offered what might be termed this “reverse pyramid” of academic achievement: “According to a study by the Center for Community Development and Civil Rights at Arizona State University, out of 100 Latino males who start elementary school, 49 leave before high school graduation. Of those who finish high school, only 10 complete college. Our high school dropout rate (29%) surpasses that of white males (7%) and African-American males (14%).” (Raul Reyes, “Education progress eludes Latinos,” USA Today, August 17, 2007, p. 11A.)

7.2. “Our public schools are woefully unprepared to deal with the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. Only 17 percent of Hispanic 4th-graders score proficient or better on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (a national test given to samples of students each year) while 42 percent of non-Hispanic white students do. Nationally, the high school graduation rate for Hispanic students is just 64 percent, and only 7 percent of incoming college students are Hispanic, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education.” (Andrew J. Rotherham, “Why the Hispanic Student Crisis Is Going Ignored,” Time, May 12, 2011.) http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2070930,00.html

The nonprofit organization Excelencia in Education released its report Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion in March 2011. That report summarized the higher education situation of Hispanics, stating “Latino educational attainment is currently lower than that of other groups (only 19 percent of Latino adults have earned an associate or higher degree.” (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 7.) http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

Regarding Latino college preparation, Roadmap presented these data; all emphasis is in the original text:

The high school completion rate for Hispanics overall increased from 60 percent in 1987 to 69 percent in 2009. Latinos are more likely to be
placed into lower academic tracks throughout their secondary schooling, which affects their college preparation. Many Hispanic students have taken remediation courses. In 2007-08, 45% of Hispanic students had taken a remedial course compared to 38% of all students. (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, pp. 8-9.) http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

As for the college enrollment of Hispanic males, these statistics were offered:

Latino’s college-going rate is lower than other groups. The college-going rate for Latino high school completers between 18-24 years of age was 37%. In comparison, the rate was 40% for black and 49% for white high school completers. . . . Many Latinos are the first in their family to enroll in college. In 2007-08, about 50% of Hispanics enrolled in college had parents whose highest level of education was a high school diploma or less. In comparison, 45% of black and 28% of white students were the first in their family to go to college . . . . (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 9.) http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

Regarding Hispanic economic background, this profile was presented:

Latinos are more likely to be low-income. In 2007-08, almost 25% of Latino students (dependents) have family incomes less than $40,000, compared to 11% of white students . . . . Latinos, on average, received lower amounts of total financial aid or any type of aid than all students—except for work-study—in 2008. Latino students received a lower average financial aid award ($7,925) than all students ($9,114). (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 9.) http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

As for Latino college completion, the data offered were these: “In 2008, Hispanics 25 years and over in the United States were less likely to have earned a postsecondary degree (19 percent) than blacks (29 percent), whites (39 percent), and Asians (59 percent).” (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 9.) http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

In summary, a 2011 report from the U.S. Department of Education listed challenges faced by Hispanics regarding education; it stated:

Yet, Latino students face persistent obstacles to educational attainment. Less than half of Latino children are enrolled in any early learning program. Only about half of all Latino students earn their high school diploma on time; those who do complete high school are only half as
likely as their peers to be prepared for college. Just 13 percent of Latinos have a bachelor’s degree, and only 4 percent have completed graduate or professional degree programs. Overall, Latinos have the lowest education attainment level of any group in the U.S. (Winning the Future: Improving Education For The Latino Community, U.S. Department of Education, April 2011, p. 2.)
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/WinningTheFutureImprovingLatinoEducation.pdf

Chapter 8: What are Obstacles to College Access and Success?

If the odds seemed stacked against some children when it comes to college access and success, what are hurdles they must confront? Harvard professor Bridget Terry Long and consultant Erin Riley summarized the obstacles such students face:

Although there are many barriers to college access and success for low-income and minority students, most can be grouped into three major categories. The first set of major barriers relates to cost. . . . A second major set of barriers to college enrollment and persistence is academic preparation. . . . The third major impediment to higher education for many students, particularly those from low-income families, is the complexity of the college admissions process and financial aid systems, as well as a lack of accurate information about higher education costs. College attendance is the culmination of a series of steps and benchmarks, and this current landscape is too complex and difficult for many families to decipher and navigate. (Bridget Terry Long and Erin Riley, “Financial Aid: A Broken Bridge to College Access?” Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 77 No. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 40-42)
http://www.hepg.org/document/19/

A similar view of the obstacles students face was expressed in the brief From Access to Success: A Funder’s Guide to Ensuring More Americans Earn Postsecondary Degrees, by Grantmakers for Education. The barriers cited “at the student level” included the following:

- Inadequate academic preparation at the K-12 level
- Incomplete information about college [and]
- Difficulty understanding the costs and accessing adequate financial aid

Regarding the inadequacy of pre-college academic preparation for some students, a recent article posted by Lisa W. Foderaro illustrated this issue at the City University of New York (CUNY), which must “. . . take every student with a high school diploma or equivalency degree”; as she stated:
About three-quarters of the 17,500 freshmen at the community colleges this year have needed remedial instruction in reading, writing or math, and nearly a quarter of the freshmen have required such instruction in all three subjects. In the past five years, a subset of students deemed “triple low remedial” — with the most severe deficits in all three subjects — has doubled, to 1,000. (“CUNY Adjusts Amid Tide of Remedial Students,” The New York Times, March 3, 2011.) [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/04/nyregion/04remedial.html?_r=1&hp]

Anthony Cabrera and the Penn State researchers had correlated SES and academic preparation for college among matriculants, stating the following:

We find a moderate association between SES and the level of academic resources among 1982 high school graduates who enrolled in higher education ($r=\cdot 216$). Lowest-SES students were less prepared. While 66% of Highest-SES students were highly prepared academically for college, merely 23% of Lowest-SES students enjoyed the same level of academic preparation. [Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 20.] [http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf]

Chapter 9: Where to Begin?

“Traditionally, four-year college students have enrolled full time immediately after graduating from high school; depended on their parents to take care of most, if not all, financial responsibilities; and worked part time or not at all. Today, only 40 percent of four-year college students fit this traditional mold.”--Susan P. Choy, Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students, American Council on Education, 2002, p. 5. [http://inpathways.net/access.pdf]

Old stereotypes regarding college students—18 years old, just graduated with a diploma from a bricks-and-mortar high school, off to live away from home at “State U.”—less-frequently apply. Indeed, many students today would be considered “non-traditional”—that is, they’re often older, commuting, and parenting! Therefore, any plan of action must begin with the individual student.

Many of the foregoing chapters have dealt with groups and averages; what we know, however, is that each student is unique in his or her family background, academic preparation, information about college admissions and financial aid, social capital, etcetera. Therefore, we must start where that students is and go from there.
In a research paper written for the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), Barbara Schneider, Professor in the College of Education at Michigan State University, opined the following in this regard:

. . . Students proceed through adolescent development at varying paces, and that [sic] a one-size-fits-all approach to early marketing and communication may not yield optimal results for students or colleges. Schneider emphasized individualized college counseling in high schools, as well as a commitment to counseling in the admission office, as important tools for ensuring that admission practices do not ignore differing student interests in or perspectives on the transition to postsecondary education. (Barbara Schneider, College Choice and Adolescent Development: Psychological and Social Implications of Early Admission, National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2009, NACAC Research Web page, in Staff Report to the NACAC Assembly: Early Notification Study, National Association for College Admission Counseling, September 2010, p. 7.)


Labeled a “key finding” of Schneider’s paper, available to members on the NACAC Research Web page, was the following:

The prospect of paying for college, the complexity of financial aid applications, and varied requirements for admission applications continue to constrain the college decision process. Between the technical nature of information requested and the procedures students are required to follow, the college decision process has become profoundly complicated, with most adolescents depending on parents and counselors to help make post-high school plans for them. (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2009, NACAC Research Web page.)

Another reference cited on the NACAC research web page was the Special Adolescent Development Issue of The Journal of College Admission, Number 198, Winter 2008. According to the NACAC site, all five of the featured articles “. . . stress the importance of individualized counseling in the college admission process. The key to understanding the effects of college admission practice on adolescent development, according to many of the authors, is for college admission counseling professionals to understand and appreciate the physical, social, and psychological contexts in which students exist.” (Staff Report to the NACAC Assembly: Early Notification Study, National Association for College Admission Counseling, September 2010, p. 7.)


According to John Christensen, retiring admissions director at St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland, “. . . The core of admissions . . . should not
Chapter 10: A Plan of Action

“On measure after measure, black males are struggling. Nationwide, they are twice as likely to be left back or assigned to dead-end special education and three times as likely to be kicked out of school as white males. All too often they’re on what educators privately dub “the prison track.”” --David L. Kirp, “There are ways to bridge the achievement gap in schools,” The Vindicator, October 19, 2010, p. A11. http://www.vindy.com/news/2010/oct/19/there-are-ways-to-bridge-the-achievement/?newswatch

Necessarily, any plan of action would be based on sound guidance principles and seek to overcome the aforementioned obstacles and barriers. But first and foremost, any plan would start early, long before students are in high school—indeed, considerably before they even enter kindergarten. Or preschool. Ideally, this early start would mean advising expectant mothers—particularly, teenagers—during the critical prenatal period of their children. This is the approach taken by Geoffrey Canada at the Harlem Children’s Zone in its “… Baby College, a nine-week prenatal and early childhood parenting class with sections on brain development, discipline and parent-child bonding,” as this account in The Washington Post described:

On a recent Saturday morning in Harlem, a few dozen pregnant women in a parenting class made resolutions for life after the baby’s birth. Avoid cursing. Provide healthy foods. Develop a sleeping routine for the infant.

‘I want my son to be perfect,’ said Naquell Williams, 22, who is unemployed and pregnant with a child whose father is in prison.

This is the starting point for the Harlem Children’s Zone: the womb. Geoffrey Canada’s nonprofit has created a web of programs that begin before birth, end with college graduation and reach almost every child growing up in 97 blocks carved out of the struggling central Harlem neighborhood. (Robin Shulman, “Harlem Program Singled Out as Model,” The Washington Post, August 2, 2009.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/01/AR2009080102297_pf.html

To be sure, there are many challenges and difficulties involved in this approach: for example, a co-worker of mine once confronted a high school advisee, asking if she were expecting. The young lady admitted she was seven months pregnant; my co-worker then assisted her, phoning the girl’s stepmother to inform the parent. No prenatal care had been received.
Happily, the new mom returned some weeks later to show us her healthy new baby!

David L. Kirp, professor of public policy at University of California Berkeley, stressed the need to start early succinctly: “Because African American boys are academically behind even before they start kindergarten, their education needs to begin earlier, at age 3 or 4.” (David L. Kirp, “There are ways to bridge the achievement gap in schools,” The Vindicator, October 19, 2010, p. A11.)

Lisette Estrella-Henderson, Solano County (CA) Office of Education assistant superintendent of educational services, also stressed the importance of early learning. As she stated: “Folks, it doesn’t start in high school, it doesn’t start in middle school, it doesn’t start in elementary school. We’re talking about starting before they get to elementary school,” she added. (Ryan Chalk, “Finding ways to united business, education in Solano County,” The Reporter, June 30, 2011.)

Nonetheless, it may be that measures would commonly occur during children’s school-age years. Regardless, a first step would be to encourage early reading for all children. As Professor Kirp put it, “focusing on reading is also smart practice.” (David L. Kirp, “There are ways to bridge the achievement gap in schools,” The Vindicator, October 19, 2010, p. A11.)

An update of the report by Grad Nation, relating to its “Civic Marshall Plan,” emphasized importance of this reading as follows:

Not being able to read proficiently by the end of fourth grade can put students on a path to dropping out by triggering academic difficulties resulting in grade retention. In 2009, more than 90 percent of low-income students failed to score proficiently on national reading exams. Half of all low-income fourth graders did not even reach the basic level. This foundational skill must be mastered to succeed in high school. (Robert Balfanz, et al., Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic—2010-2011 Annual Update, America’s Promise Alliance, March 2011, p. 20.)

Another focus would be on encouraging regular attendance at school. Again to quote the Grad Nation Update,
In recent years, there has been a growing awareness that communities with low graduation rates often have very high rates of chronic absenteeism from the early grades onward. Research shows that three out of four students who are severely chronically absent in the sixth grade never graduate from high school. (Robert Balfanz, et al., *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic—2010-2011 Annual Update*, America’s Promise Alliance, March 2011, p. 20.)


Also, per the *Update*, is an emphasis on “early warning and intervention systems” and an emphasis on the middle grades. Indeed, according to that report:

Research has shown that students who eventually leave high school before graduating exhibit strong predictive warning signs of dropping out, such as infrequent attendance, behavior infractions, and course failure. These warning signs — the ABCs of dropout prevention — more accurately predict whether a student will drop out of high school than any other socioeconomic factors and can be used to predict high school graduation as early as the start of middle school. Given this reality, states are enhancing the quality of the data they are collecting and are building longitudinal data systems. This is prompting the adoption of early warning systems throughout the country at the state, district, and school levels. (Robert Balfanz, et al., *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic—2010-2011 Annual Update*, America’s Promise Alliance, March 2011, p. 21.)


Two other factors cited in the original report *Building a Grad Nation* are also important to emphasize. The first was parental engagement, of which that first report stated the following:

Research has shown that students with involved parents, regardless of their family income or background, are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher level classes, attend school and pass their classes, develop better social skills, graduate from high school, attend college, and find productive work. The opposite is true for students whose parents are less engaged. (Robert Balfanz, et al., *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic, America’s Promise Alliance*, November 2010, p. 52)

http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/~/media/Files/Our%20Work/Grad%20Nation/Building%20a%20Grad%20Nation/Building%20a%20Grad%20Nation_FullReport_FINAL%2011-30-10.ashx
Another factor cited in the original report was “teacher training and effectiveness.” As that report emphasized, “Research shows that a knowledgeable and engaging teacher is the single greatest advantage a student can have to raise their academic potential.” (Robert Balfanz, et al., Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic, America’s Promise Alliance, November 2010, p. 48) http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Grad-Nation/~/media/Files/Our%20Work/Grad%20Nation/Building%20a%20Grad%20Nation_Building%20a%20Grad%20Nation_FullReport_FINAL%2011-30-10.ashx

Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach for America, which trains recent-college graduates to work in schools often serving underrepresented students, recognized the need, as she put it, “...to end educational inequity.” As Kopp stated: “We have learned that education in low-income communities can and must be transformational—that we can ensure strong outcomes by committing ourselves to changing the trajectory of students from the path their economic background would predict.” She also emphasized how vital this task was, opining “Given that we know that education has the potential to be transformative, we must—for the sake of children and families, for our country, and for our collective well-being—do all that it takes to fulfill that potential.” (Wendy Kopp with Steven Farr, A Chance To Make History: What Works and What Doesn’t in Providing an Excellent Education for All, New York: PublicAffairs, 2011, pp. 143-144.)

Interestingly, when Kopp asked Dave Levin, founder of the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), “...what it really was that accounted for the [original Bronx] school’s extraordinary success,” she reported the following: “He looked at me blankly: ‘It’s nothing. It’s all the basics.’” In Kopp’s view, Levin’s position was that “There Are No Shortcuts;” as she observed, “Dave was trying to communicate that there was nothing elusive and nothing magical about the success.” (Wendy Kopp with Steven Farr, A Chance To Make History: What Works and What Doesn’t in Providing an Excellent Education for All, New York: PublicAffairs, 2011, p. 53.)

Marc Tucker, National Center on Education and the Economy president and CEO, studied education reform around the world; his conclusion was similar to Dave Levin’s. As Tucker stated in an interview: “In one phrase, the key lesson is there are no shortcuts.” (Liz Willen, “Q&A with Marc Tucker: Why we need a new reform agenda to compete internationally,” The Hechinger Report, June 29, 2011.) http://hechingerreport.org/content/qa-with-marc-tucker-why-we-need-a-new-reform-agenda-to-compete-internationally_5915/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+HechingerReport+%28Hechinger+Report%29

But I know, after serving in public education for 30 years—13 years as a classroom teacher of high school social studies and 17 years as a building and district administrator—the importance of effective instructors. Indeed, I am convinced that caring, competent, and conscientious educators are the sine qua non to enabling all students—particularly, those at-risk—to gain college access and success.
Marc Tucker contrasted the treatment of teachers in high-performing countries with that in the United States; he stated:

They pay their beginning teachers at levels comparable to those that young people in the highest professions can make coming out of college or graduate school, much more relatively speaking than in the U.S. They insist that all teachers, including elementary teachers, really understand the subjects they will teach in-depth. ... They also insist that they know their craft. We [in the U.S.] pay our teachers badly and we don’t insist they know their subject. And we don’t insist they know their craft. It should surprise nobody that the kids don’t learn as well. And because they don’t learn as well, we get angry at the teachers and their unions. Our answer is test-and-accountability systems of a kind that none of these other countries have. (Liz Willen, “Q&A with Marc Tucker: Why we need a new reform agenda to compete internationally,” The Hechinger Report, June 29, 2011.)

Chapter 11: Cost

11.1. When it comes to cost, it’s helpful to consider the view of Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, President Emeritus at The George Washington University, who described higher education pricing as follows:

Colleges and universities have been using the sales model for years: it is called ‘scholarships’ and other forms of financial aid. And most admissions officers can tell you their school’s ‘discount rate,’ a term of art that comes from the merchandising sector. Statements like, ‘Our tuition is $42,000 a year but 48 percent of our students receive aid,’ tells us that 52 percent pay full price and all the others get a markdown. (Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, “Price Does Not Equal Cost,” The New York Times, February 22, 2011.)

Indeed, for some students—particularly, those interested in private colleges and universities—the “sticker price” is often not the actual price to be paid. Simply put, many schools discount that price—that is, reduce tuition for certain students, depending on their particular characteristics. In fact, according to a posting by Daniel de Vise in The Washington Post, “The average tuition ‘discount rate’ among private, nonprofit colleges hit a record high of 42.4 percent in 2010, meaning that the average student now pays about 58 cents on the dollar of published tuition. For students and their families, it means there’s more reason than ever to disregard the soaring sticker prices at
However, for the underrepresented students with odds stacked against their access to college and having reduced chances of success, these financial discounts are often irrelevant, since their high school grade-point average (GPA), class-rank, and score on the ACT or SAT will often not qualify them to receive much—if any—merit aid (i.e., scholarships.) For example, at Crane and Dyett High Schools in Chicago, the average ACT composite was reported to be just over 14 (of 36); according to an online posting, “One senior at Crane in 2010 had an ACT score above 20, two at Dyett.” When it came to grade-point averages, according to the same post, “Only five graduates at Dyett had GPS’s greater than 3.0 or a B-average.” (Sarah Karp, “College-going inches up from Chicago high schools,” Catalyst Chicago—Catalyst Notebook, July 21, 2011.)

Indeed, when considering criteria used by the University of Rochester, for example, in awarding merit aid, many of the “12 steps that mattered for earning merit scholarships in the UR Class of 2015,” unfortunately, often would not apply to many underrepresented students: “AP, IB, honors, and/or advanced courses, . . . semester academic course ‘A' grade, . . . $425 for each 1 point higher ACT composite, . . . Winners of our High School Awards (Bausch & Lomb, Xerox, George Eastman, and Frederick Douglass/Susan B. Anthony).” (Jonathan Burdick, “What kind of scholarship can I get,” University of Rochester Blog, Office of Admissions and Financial Aid, June 11, 2011.)

Unfortunately, the federal Pell Grant program, the nation’s largest for low-income students, assisting over 3 million students at 6,000 schools, has often been undercut by tuition increases, despite the increase in full-grant awards. Two economists at the University of Oregon concluded the following in regard to the effects of these rising Pell Grant maximums:

A prominent question in public debate is whether Pell grants tend to be appropriated by universities through increases in tuition – consistent with what is known as the Bennett hypothesis. Based on a panel of 1554 colleges and universities from 1989 to 1996, we find little evidence of the Bennett hypothesis for in-state tuition for public universities. For private universities, though, increases in Pell grants appear to be matched nearly one for one by increases in list (and net) tuition. Results for out-of-state tuition for public universities are similar to those for private universities, suggesting that they behave more like private ones in setting out-of-state tuition. (Larry D. Singell, Jr. and Joe A. Stone, For Whom the Pell Tolls: The Response of University Tuition to Federal Grants-in-Aid, September 2005, v4.1, Abstract.)
Nonetheless, securing need-based aid is critical—particularly since, according to a 2011 posting by Jenna Johnson, “Nearly half of African American undergraduates receive Pells, as do 40 percent of Latino undergrads.” (Jenna Johnson, “College presidents, students lobby to keep Pell Grant funding,” The Washington Post—Campus Overload, July 21, 2011.)


Indeed, the Roadmap (discussed earlier) offered this recommendation in regard to reducing the cost of college for Latinos:

**Guarantee need-based aid for qualified students.”** [emphasis in original] As it explained, “Finding and receiving sufficient financial aid to pay for college are complex and cumbersome processes. Providing potential and current students with a guarantee of their eligibility for financial support has been effective for enrolling and retaining low-income students at several institutions and has the potential to be effective on a larger scale.’ (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 15.)

http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

Also from the Roadmap regarding cost of college was the recommendation to **“Make college accessible and affordable for students of all economic backgrounds.”** [emphasis in original] “Policy efforts” offered included the following:

Market state scholarship programs more intentionally targeted at students from economically disadvantaged and underrepresented communities to increase their application of federal and private financial aid resources to pay for college.

Create financial incentives for low-income students to remain continuously enrolled in higher education until degree attainment. This could include loan forgiveness, textbook waivers, or tuition discounts to students who remain continuously enrolled. . . .

Expand need-based funding from the state for low-income students. [and]

Charge leaders of public higher education institutions to develop a coordinated action plan to increase capacity, access, and degree attainment . . . . (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 17.)

http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

An April 2011 report indicates that students across the United States at community colleges that choose not to participate in the federal loan program are denied the opportunity to have such loans—which may result in them taking out private loans, with higher interest rates, or using credit cards to pay
expenses. This Issue Brief, published by The Project on Student Debt, stated that “Experts all agree that, for those who need to borrow to pay for college, federal student loans are the safest and most affordable option. Unfortunately, some colleges choose not to participate in the federal student loan program, preventing their students from qualifying for this important source of financial aid.” [emphasis in original] According to the report, “About nine percent of community college students nationally – more than one million students in 31 states – are enrolled in colleges that summarily block their students’ access to federal student loans.” [emphasis in original] (“Still Denied: Community Colleges Shortchange Students by Not Offering Federal Loans,” The Project on Student Debt, April 2011, p. 1.) http://projectonstudentdebt.org/files/pub/still_denied.pdf

According to another report from The Project on Student Debt, the risks of private loans are important for students to consider; as that document noted:

There is general consensus that students should exhaust all available federal financial aid, including federal loans, before considering other forms of financing like private student loans. Federal loans are available to students regardless of their or their family’s income. Private student loans are one of the riskiest ways to pay for college, and they are not financial aid any more than a credit card is when used to pay for textbooks or tuition. They typically have uncapped, variable interest rates and cost the most for those who can least afford them, while federal student loans have fixed interest rates that are not affected by the borrower’s income or credit score. Private student lenders are not required to provide the important borrower options and protections that come with federal loans, such as unemployment deferments, income-based repayment, public service loan forgiveness, and cancellation if the borrower dies, is severely disabled, or is defrauded by a school. (Matthew Reed, et al., Critical Choices: How Colleges Can Help Students and Families Make Better Decisions about Private Loans, The Project on Student Debt, p. 2.) http://projectonstudentdebt.org/files/pub/critical_choices.pdf

The bottom line on student loans was succinctly put in a 2011 report done for Moody’s credit rating agency by Cristian Deritis; that analyst stated:

Unless students limit their debt burdens, choose fields of study that are in demand, and successfully complete their degrees on time, they will find themselves in worse financial positions and unable to earn the projected income that justified taking out their loans in the first place. (Cristian Deritis, Student Lending’s Failing Grade, Moody’s Analytics, Regional Financial Review, July 2011, p. 59.) http://image.exct.net/lib/fefb127575640d/m/2/Student+Lendings+Failing+Grade.pdf
11.2. Often, students and parents are dissuaded from applying to a particular college or university because it seems high-priced. As Lynn O’Shaughnessy said in her post on this issue, “For lots of families that’s nonsense. Published college costs are meaningless. Most families face college expenses that are much lower than a school’s sticker price.” Per O’Shaughnessy:

A new study of recent college applicants illustrates just how widespread the sticker price myth is. Fifty nine percent of students said they only looked at college price tags when deciding which schools they should send applications. According to the Student Poll, which was produced by the College Board and Art & Science Group, a higher-ed consulting firm, only 28% of applicants considered the net cost of college. That’s the actual cost that families pay after they receive grants and other financial aid. (Lynn O’Shaughnessy, “Biggest Financial Aid Myth: I Can’t Afford This College,” The College Solution, CBS Moneywatch, May 25, 2010.)


Therefore, instead of focusing on the stated "sticker price," a prospective applicant needs to determine his or her own "net cost"—that is, what they would have to pay after all financial aid for which they are eligible has been deducted from the published cost of attendance. Indeed, the only line that should matter to students regarding college is the bottom line (i.e., net price): how much they’ll have to pay after all financial aid (need-based and merit) is subtracted from a school’s total cost of attendance.

By October 29, 2011, the federal government requires that colleges and universities which participate in its financial-aid program have posted a net-price calculator on their school’s website. A requirement of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, these calculators will contain two parts, according to the U.S. Department of Education website:

The Department’s template is made up of two components: (1) the institutional data maintenance application and (2) the user application. In the first component, institutions input the following data:

Price of attendance
Median amounts of grant and scholarship aid awarded to, and accepted by, first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students by EFC range

In the second component, users are asked nine questions to establish the following:

Their dependency status
Their estimated cost of attendance

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The website also explained how the calculator operates, stating the following:

The template uses a ‘look-up’ table populated with data from the FAFSA applications database to identify a median EFC. Median EFC is then matched with the median grant and scholarship aid amount entered by the institution for the corresponding EFC range to determine the student’s estimated amount of total grant aid. Estimated net price is calculated by subtracting estimated total grant aid from the estimated total price of attendance. (“Net Price Calculator Requirement,” National Center for Education Statistics—Integrated Postsecondary Data System website.)

An early examination of these calculators noted the following intended benefit to students and their families:

By providing estimates for cost of attendance, grant aid, and net price (defined as cost of attendance minus grant aid), those calculators are intended to ‘help current and prospective students, families, and other consumers estimate the individual net price of an institution of higher education for a student.’ Net price calculators will provide individualized results, based on the student’s family, financial, and other circumstances. (Adding It All Up: An Early Look at Net Price Calculators, The Institute for College Access & Success, March 2011, p. 4.)
http://ticas.org/files/pub/adding_it_all_up.pdf

But according to a report made by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance to the U.S. Congress and Secretary of Education in June 2011, there were still issues with the net-price calculators. Nonetheless, the report began with the following statement:

In making decisions about college, it is essential that students and parents focus on net price, which is the dollar amount that must be paid after subtracting financial assistance from cost of attendance. Throughout the decision making process — from considering whether college is a financial possibility, to choosing which college to attend, to assessing whether to continue once enrolled — net price, rather than list price, is of singular importance. For most families, particularly low- and moderate-income families, while work and loans are necessary, the most consequential type of assistance is grant aid — need-based and merit-based — and the central measure of net price is cost of attendance minus grant aid from all sources.
A net price calculator is one of two financial aid tools designed to provide students and parents with accurate and timely information about the net price of a particular college, or type of college. A well-designed calculator can provide an early estimate of cost of attendance and financial aid long before application for admission. A second tool — a financial aid award letter — provides a list of the financial aid an admitted student will likely receive, once enrolled. (The Bottom Line: Ensuring That Students and Parents Understand the Net Price of College: A Report to the U.S. Congress and Secretary of Education, Washington, DC: Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, June 2011, p. iii.)

http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acsfa/bottomline6june2011.pdf

Interestingly, the University of California schools have offered calculators on their websites since 2008. These devices, called “financial aid estimators,” ask 11 questions of applicants and satisfy the federal mandate. (Kathleen Pender, “College websites adding net price calculators,” SFGate, March 24, 2011.)

http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/03/23/BU9P1IHVFV.DTL

Finally, Tamar Lewin reported in The New York Times that on June 30, 2011, the U.S. Department of Education put up a new website, labeled “College Affordability and Transparency Center,” at http://collegecost.ed.gov/catc/Default.aspx; according to Lewin, it displays the following information:

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/30/education/30collegeweb.htm?_r=1

11.3. To keep a student’s cost for college as low as possible, they may want to consider the option of matriculating to a community college before transferring to a four-year school. Sometimes, financial incentives can make this route one worth considering. In the state of Indiana, for example, Ivy Tech Community College will now offer a scholarship of 15 credit-hours (approximately $1,500) to any of the state’s 373 high school valedictorians. The intention, according to David Moltz’s posting on Inside Higher Ed, was simple: “They merely hope the students will pass through to pick up some spare credits to transfer along their route to a baccalaureate degree, and that their presence will help promote the state’s two-year colleges to more households.” (David Moltz, “Courting Valedictorians,” Inside Higher Ed, July 8, 2011.)

In the state of Massachusetts, a transfer program for community college grads offers a most reasonable college cost. According to an Associated Press article,

A new program is aimed at making it easier for graduates of two-year community colleges to attend--and afford--the University of Massachusetts flagship Amherst campus. Community college students with a grade point average of 3.0 or better would be guaranteed admission to UMass-Amherst with free tuition. Those with a GPA of at least 2.5 percent would also be guaranteed admission and would be eligible for financial aid and other services. The current in-state tuition at the university is $1,714 a year. ("Umass woos community college grads," *The Boston Globe*, March 23, 2011.)


This sort of transfer with financial aid is also available to at least a couple of private colleges. Again from Massachusetts, comes a post on this postsecondary pathway: “Students who complete an associate’s degree at Mass Bay Community College with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher will be guaranteed admission to Lasell College, the schools announced in a press release.” In addition to guaranteed admission at Lasell, “. . . students who have maintained a cumulative grade point average of 3.2 or higher while completing their associate’s degree at MassBay will be eligible to receive a $5,000 scholarship.” (Mary Moore, “Lasell College guarantees admission to Mass Bay CC students,” *Boston Business Journal*, April 4, 2011)

http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2011/04/04/lasell-college-guarantees-admission-to.html# In Ohio, students who complete their associate degree and a third year of classes at Columbus State Community College can then transfer credits to private Franklin University and complete their bachelor’s degree for a total of approximately $21,000. (“Franklin, Columbus State expand partnership,” *Columbus Business First*, March 2, 2009.)

http://www.bizjournals.com/columbus/stories/2009/03/02/daily8.html#

Another financial alternative to consider is attending the regional campus of a state university to save money, since these local campuses can have lower costs. An illustration of this approach was evident in the investigation I collaborated on regarding Kent State University in Ohio. According to that analysis, students with an expected family contribution (EFC) of $0 on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) could attend the regional campuses of KSU at Salem, East Liverpool, or Trumbull at no cost, based on the maximum federal Pell grant of $5,350 in 2009-10. (That full Pell amount of $5,350 annually would be split between the fall and spring semesters, for $2,675 in financial aid per term.) Given tuition at KSU regional campuses for freshmen and sophomores at $2,469 per semester, students would not only get their entire tuition paid by the Pell Grant but also get money

Interestingly, when it comes to student views on cost, it was not their most important consideration in choosing a college. According to a survey of 21,000 high school seniors, done of its registrants by Fastweb.com with consulting firm Maguire Associates in January 2011, “total cost” was the fourth most frequently-cited factor (by 87% of respondents)—and tied with “Availability of need- or merit-based scholarships” (87%)—after “quality of major” (94%), “value’ of education, including quality and cost” (92%), and “employment opportunities after college” (91%). (Jacques Steinberg, “Economy Is Growing Factor in College Choices, Poll Finds,” The New York Times, The Choice: Demystifying College Admissions and Aid, March 23, 2011.)

11.4. As for the cost of college, students and their parents must remember the old adage: “Let the buyer beware.” Today, horror stories abound of students who have gone into debt, often failed to earn a degree, and are still unable to find a job. One such student was Becky Loring, who attended Westwood College, a proprietary (for-profit) school in Florida. According to a Tampa newspaper article, “Loring, 32, now owes the government and private lenders more than $100,000. Working in sales, she is far from the graphic design job she studied for, barely able to make her college loan interest payments.”When I think about it, I just feel nauseated,” she said. "How did I let this happen?" (Lindsay Peterson, “For-profit colleges leave many with debt but no jobs,” The Tampa Tribune, March 27, 2011.)  http://www2.tbo.com/content/2011/mar/27/for-profit-colleges-leave-some-with-debt-but-no-jo/news-breaking/

The growth of for-profit schools in higher education has been noted in a number of recent media articles. For example, David Glenn, posting on the release of the U.S. Department of Education’s The Condition of Education 2011, offered these observations regarding the increase in for-profit postsecondary schooling:

One of the report’s chief themes is the rise of for-profit higher education during the last decade. In 1999 for-profit institutions accounted for 3.1 percent of the students enrolled in American undergraduate institutions. By 2009 their share had risen to 9 percent. The sector also quintupled its share of bachelor’s degrees: Only 1 percent of the bachelor’s degrees awarded in 1999 came from for-profit institutions, but by 2009 the figure was 5 percent. (Public colleges and private nonprofit colleges each lost two percentage points of market share during the decade.) (David Glenn, “Annual Portrait of Education Documents Swift Rise of For-Profit Colleges,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 26, 2011.)
http://chronicle.com/article/Annual-Portrait-of-Education/127639/
Glenn further noted both the comparative amount spent by proprietary institutions for instruction and their tuition. Using data from *The Condition of Education 2011*, the writer stated:

In 2008-9 for-profit institutions spent far less on instruction than did colleges in other sectors. Among four-year institutions, for-profits’ instructional expenditures averaged $2,659 per full-time student, as opposed to $9,418 at public colleges and $15,289 at private nonprofit colleges. But tuition at for-profit institutions was not correspondingly lower. The average net price for full-time dependent undergraduates in 2007-8 was $30,900 at four-year for-profit institutions, versus $26,600 at private nonprofit colleges and $15,600 at public institutions. (David Glenn, “Annual Portrait of Education Documents Swift Rise of For-Profit Colleges,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 26, 2011.)

http://chronicle.com/article/Annual-Por****t-of-Education/127639/

Commenting on that same 2011 Department of Education report, writer Mary Beth Marklein described the typical students enrolled in proprietary institutions as well as electronic instructional modes utilized. As she noted, “For profit colleges were more likely to enroll full-time students 25 and older than [sic], and to enroll students in distance education such as online courses. Nearly one in five students (19%) attending for-profit four-year colleges were enrolled entirely in distance education.” (Mary Beth Marklein, “For-profit colleges see major gains in past decade,” *USA TODAY*, May 26, 2011.)


For additional information on the sector of higher education alternatively referred to as "for-profit/private sector/corporate," data released by the U.S. Education Department on April 6, 2010, can be accessed at this link from *Inside Higher Ed*: http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/04/07/enroll

On June 24, 2010, Chairman Tom Harkin opened hearings by the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions regarding for-profit higher education. At the outset, a report was issued; it contained the following conclusions:

The Federal government and taxpayers are making a large and rapidly growing investment in financial aid to for-profit schools, with few tools in place to gauge how well that money is being spent. Available data show that very few students enroll in for-profit schools without taking on debt, while a staggering number of students are leaving the schools, presumably many without completing a degree or certificate. To boost enrollment, some for-profit schools recruit large numbers of new students each year. In some cases, schools enroll more students over the
course of the year than were enrolled at the beginning of the year. To ensure these enrollment increases, it is necessary for the schools to devote very large shares of Title IV dollars and other Federal financial aid to marketing activities, not education.

These schools are increasingly relying on Federal financial aid dollars for revenue. When all Title IV, Department of Defense and Veteran’s Administration funds are included, many of these schools are receiving nearly all of their funds from Federal sources. While increasing their reliance on Federal dollars as a source of revenue, for-profit schools are at best spending only slightly more than half of revenues actually educating students, and in several cases are shrinking the amount spent on instruction. Yet these same schools are reporting profit margins of 20 percent and higher to investors.

Students at for-profit schools are also taking on higher amounts of debt than their peers at public and nonprofit schools. Nearly half of student loan borrowers who entered repayment in 2007 and defaulted by 2009 attended for-profit schools (44 percent), even though less than 10 percent of students attend these schools.

The publicly available data, in tandem with mounting reports of questionable practices and poor student outcome, yields a mixed portrait of the for-profit higher education sector that calls into question the taxpayers return on their multi-billion-dollar investment, and leaves many unanswered questions with regard to whether a sufficient number of students receive an education that provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to obtain jobs to repay their student debt. *(Emerging Risk?: An Overview of Growth, Spending, Student Debt and Unanswered Questions in For-Profit Higher Education, p. 11)*


A posting in May 2011 by Doug Lederman on loan repayment provided a dire warning—particularly, it seems, for students at for-profit colleges. Regarding loan defaults generally, he noted the following:

William J. Taggart, chief operating officer of the department’s Federal Student Aid office, said that 8.9 percent of federal student loan borrowers who entered repayment between October 1, 2008, and September 30, 2009, had defaulted by September 30, 2010, up from 7.0 percent the year before. That rise—of 27 percent—nearly equaled the largest percentage increase in loan default rates since the Education Department began tracking them in 1987; that increase occurred just two years ago, when the rates rose to 6.7 percent from 5.2 percent. *(Doug Lederman, “Trouble Ahead on Student Loan Defaults,” Inside Higher Ed, May 23, 2011.)*

As for loan defaults from students in proprietary institutions, Lederman stated this:

While rates rose for all three major sectors of higher education, the growth was driven particularly by an escalation in the number of defaults involving borrowers from for-profit colleges. Students from for-profit colleges, who make up about 12 percent of all undergraduate students, made up about 27.7 percent of federal student loan borrowers who entered repayment beginning in October 2008. Yet they made up nearly half (47.4 percent) of all borrowers who had defaulted on their loans within two years of entering repayment. (Doug Lederman, “Trouble Ahead on Student Loan Defaults,” Inside Higher Ed, May 23, 2011.)


It is important to note that if a student defaults on a federal loan, the U.S. Department of Education can ultimately refer the matter to the Justice Department for possible legal action. According to a recent posting by Marty Roney in USA TODAY, “If the government does sue, it can go after wages, bank accounts, put liens on people's property and hold parents responsible for their children’s debt if they co-signed the education loans.” Per Roney’s post, “There were 918 referrals in 2006; that number rose to 2,596 in 2009, and then to 5,393 last year, Education Department figures show.” Interestingly, said the writer, “Since January 2010, the Education Department has stopped going after defaulted loans of less than $45,000 through the Justice Department. That doesn’t mean people who aren’t making payments are off the hook. Bad loans of less than that are handled by private law firms on a contract basis . . . .” (Marty Roney, “Feds chase more student loan defaults,” USA TODAY, May 1, 2011.)


To access the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled "FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES: Undercover Testing Finds Colleges Encouraged Fraud and Engaged in Deceptive and Questionable Marketing Practices," dated August 4, 2010, the following link can be clicked:


According to that GAO report, you can watch video clips of applications by undercover investigators and listen to voicemail messages from proprietary educational institution recruiters at this link:

http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-948T

To see the annual revenue and number of students enrolled by some of the largest for-profit companies/universities, this link to an article in The Wall Street Journal, dated August 30, 2010, can be used:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703418004575455773289209384.html?mo
To read the article by Stephanie Chen, “For-profit college risk: Huge debt, questionable degree,” posted on 9/2/10, at CNN online, this link is available:

Regarding the education provided for the cost at for-profit institutions, a posting by Kelly Field in The Chronicle of Higher Education on a lawsuit filed by two former Kaplan Career Institute instructors in Pittsburgh raised questions about that site’s program, where students face “. . . an average total cost of $48,959 a year, including room and board.” According to Field’s post, the whistle-blowing instructors criticized the Pittsburgh campus, named “school of the year” three times and recognized by Kaplan Higher Education for “. . . its rapid growth and high graduation and job-placement rates.” Field stated:

But some former faculty members say the honor came at a steep price: To keep those numbers high, administrators would pressure employees to falsify attendance records, raise grades, and manipulate job-placement numbers. If a professor refused to change a student’s grade, the professor’s supervisor would do it, the faculty members say. (Kelly Field, “Faculty at For-Profits Alleged Constant Pressure to Keep Students Enrolled,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 8, 2011.)
http://chronicle.com/article/Pawns-in-the-For-Profit/127424/

Beyond Kaplan, the reporter indicated issues at other for-profit institutions; per Field:

In interviews with The Chronicle and lawsuits filed around the country, more than a dozen current and former professors from six of the seven largest publicly traded education companies say they were leaned on to dumb down courses, offer lengthy extensions, and change failing grades. They describe a system in which expectations are low, cheating is tolerated, and faculty are under tremendous pressure to keep students enrolled. (Kelly Field, “Faculty at For-Profits Alleged Constant Pressure to Keep Students Enrolled,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 8, 2011.)
http://chronicle.com/article/Pawns-in-the-For-Profit/127424/

Finally, in an interview on NPR’s Fresh Air, investigative reporter Daniel Golden of Bloomberg News commented on recruiting practices of for-profit educational institutions—particularly, those they seek out to have enroll. Golden’s view was the following:

The target population tends to be predominantly low-income and minorities. I visited homeless shelters where for-profit colleges were seeking students. They’ve also looked for students very aggressively through active-duty military whose tuition is paid by the Defense Department and war veterans whose tuition is paid by the GI Bill.
Matriculation to such schools can jeopardize the financial future of students—in no small part, because of the loan-debt they accumulate. According to Golden, "Because the tuitions are high and they've had to borrow to pay the tuition, they're laden with debt and often they can't find a good enough job to be able to pay that debt off," he says. "And because these student loans can't be discharged even in bankruptcy, they follow these former students throughout life. . . . It can be a lifelong drag on people who already are struggling." (Daniel Golden, interview on NPR Fresh Air, “For-Profit Colleges: Targeting People Who Can't Pay,” May 12, 2011.) http://www.npr.org/2011/05/12/136238528/for-profit-colleges-targeting-people-who-cant-pay

11.5. “Self help” refers to the kind of financial aid people love to hate—because a student or parent often has to pay it back! We may not like it, but colleges expect both students and parents to "help themselves" pay for their higher education--hence, the term "self-help." The most common variety consists of a loan—for many, the four-letter word in college financial aid! Loans, of course, must be repaid (with interest), which results in students' loan-debt.

Today, many students--and their parents--will likely consider loans to pay for higher education. To help students and parents learn more about borrowing for college, Lynn O'Shaughnessy has compiled several of her blog-posts on loans, "Best College Loan Advice: 9 Tips for Borrowing for College," at this link: http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/best-college-loan-advice-9-tips-for-borrowing-for-college/1864/?tag=col1;blog-river

Before a student takes out loans to pay for college, he or she and their family should investigate available options (i.e., “shop” for student loans.) Specifically, they need to consider the kinds of loans offered as well as interest rates and repayment obligations. To become aware of these possibilities, the blog-post by O'Shaughnessy, entitled "Find the Right Student Loan," can be read at this link: http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/find-the-right-student-loan/371/?tag=col1;blog-river

Students and their parents who need to borrow to pay for college may research their options for loans often wonder whether they are better off taking out federal student loans or private loans. More than simply interest rates and terms of repayment are involved in this consideration. To see some comparisons between government and private loans, the post by Sandra Block on May 4, 2010, in USA TODAY can be seen at this link:
Both students—and their parents—often have to borrow money to pay for college. Despite taking out all federal student loans for which they qualify, some still consider private student loans. To get the best (lowest) rates of interest on these loans, students should shop around! In her blog-post from May 14, 2010, Lynn O'Shaughnessy stated this little-know fact in that regard: "The interest rates that lenders offer on private student loans are wildly different even for borrowers with the same credit scores." To read her entire post, this link can be used:


An important question students need to ask in regard to college loans is "How much should I borrow?" With the hazards of loan-debt so well-publicized today, this is an important question to ponder. O'Shaughnessy addressed this issue in her blog-post "College Debt: Don’t Borrow More Than $27,000" at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/college-debt-dont-borrow-more-than-27000/1521/?tag=col1;blog-river

Even after considering all elements a student may receive in his/her financial-aid package, they may still need more money to pay for a particular college or university. In that case, parents often consider taking out loans to assist their child. However, how much parents should borrow is often not addressed. Lynn O'Shaughnessy confronted this issue in her blog-post "College Loans: How Much Should Parents Borrow?" at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/college-loans-how-much-should-parents-borrow/1510/?tag=col1;blog-river

Borrowing to pay college expenses is becoming a necessity for more students. The percentage of students who have college loans is growing, as O'Shaughnessy discussed in her blog-post "The Soaring Popularity of College Student Loans," at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-soaring-popularity-of-college-student-loans/545/?tag=col1;blog-river

Borrowing for college is an important issue today, as student loan-debt increases—sometimes to scary levels. To read a report by Sandy Baum and Patricia Steele for The College Board entitled "Who Borrows Most? Bachelor’s Degree Recipients with High Levels of Student Debt," click this link:


To read Lynn O'Shaughnessy's highlights of this report, check out her blog-post here:

Despite all the information available, mounting loan-debt of college students is a financial crisis affecting many college students today. Indeed, according to a post in *The New York Times*, average student debt for college graduates is over $23,000—and rising. Per that article by Jacques Steinberg, “Students who graduated from college in 2008 with loans carried an average debt of $23,200—an increase of nearly 25 percent, or $4,550, when compared with those who graduated just four years earlier. These figures appear in the latest study by the Project on Student Debt, an initiative of the Institute for College Access and Success, a nonprofit organization.” (Jacques Steinberg, “Average Debt for Graduating College Seniors Rises to $23,200," *The New York Times*—The Choice: Demystifying College Admissions and Aid, December 2, 2009.)

To read first-hand, student accounts of being in debt from college expenses, click on the series from HUFF POST COLLEGE at this link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/22/college-debt_n_471023.html?slidenumber=1

To see additional articles about the hazards of taking on too much loan-debt for college, click on the following links:


11.6. What are the odds of winning an athletic scholarship that could pay for a student’s higher education? This is an important question, since many students—particularly, from underrepresented groups—aspire to competing in college sports. The chances, according to education writer Lynn O’Shaughnessy, are not good. As she stated: “The odds of winning an athletic scholarship are minuscule. About 2% of high school athletes end up capturing a sports scholarship to an NCAA school.” Using statistics from the NCAA, O’Shaughnessy found the following for male athletes:

3.1% senior high school players (less than 1 in 35) end up on teams in college.

6% of high school seniors (1 in 16) will play football in college.

6.4% of senior high school players (3 in 50) will play baseball in college.

10.8% of high school senior players (less than 3 in 50) will play hockey in college.
5.6% of high school seniors (less than 3 in 50) will play soccer in college. (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “The Odds of Playing College Sports,” CBS MoneyWatch, April 4, 2011.) http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-odds-of-playing-college-sports/4966/?tag=col1;blog-river

For female athletes, O'Shaughnessy discovered that “3.5% of high school seniors playing basketball (3 in 100) will play college basketball.” (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “The Odds of Playing College Sports,” CBS MoneyWatch, April 4, 2011.) http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-odds-of-playing-college-sports/4966/?tag=col1;blog-river

The figures are even lower for students hoping to play professional sports. Indeed, O'Shaughnessy posted the following data on those odds:

- 0.3% of high school basketball players (3 in 10,000) will eventually be drafted by an NBA team.
- .08% of high school seniors (8 in 10,000) will eventually be drafted by an NFL team.
- .44% of high school seniors (1 in 200) will eventually be drafted by a MLB team.
- .32% of high school seniors playing hockey will eventually be drafted by an NHL team.
- .07% of high school seniors who play soccer will eventually be drafted by a MLS team. (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “The Odds of Playing College Sports,” CBS MoneyWatch, April 4, 2011.) http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-odds-of-playing-college-sports/4966/?tag=col1;blog-river

For female basketball players, according to O'Shaughnessy’s data from the NCAA, “.03% of high school seniors playing basketball will eventually be drafted through the WNBA.” (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “The Odds of Playing College Sports,” CBS MoneyWatch, April 4, 2011.) http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-odds-of-playing-college-sports/4966/?tag=col1;blog-river

As she summarized, “The odds of playing sports in college is [sic] minimal and the odds of being paid to play a college sport is [sic] even worse. Your best bet for capturing college money is to succeed in the classroom.” (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “The Odds of Playing College Sports,” CBS MoneyWatch, April 4, 2011.) http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-odds-of-playing-college-sports/4966/?tag=col1;blog-river

“Amen,” I say.

11.7. In college admissions, the expression “summer melt” typically refers to those students who have indicated (by May 1) to a particular college or university that they will enroll, but then don’t, in fact, matriculate. This phenomenon was one reason for assigning initially-unsuccessful applicants to
a wait-list, so they could be invited to replace such no-shows. Today, however, the term “summer melt” is also being applied to those often-underrepresented students who seem headed for college but then have circumstances intervene—which can prevent their enrollment. Indeed, according to a recent online post by Scott Jaschik, “This kind of summer melt involves low-income students who have almost made it into college, but may not make it there--students who applied, were admitted, filled out their financial aid forms, and qualified for substantial assistance.” (Scott Jaschik, “The Other ‘Summer Melt’ in Admissions,” Inside Higher Ed, April 4, 2011.)

http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/04/04/new_research_points_to_a_summer_melt_issue_for_low_income_students

(Another term used for this failure/inability to matriculate is “wilt,” defined as follows: “Wilt is the percent of children who expect to graduate from a 4-year college prior to leaving high school but do not attend college shortly after leaving high school (between ages 17 to 23).”) (William Elliott III, Mesmin Destin, and Terri Friedline, Taking Stock of Ten Years of Research on the Relationship between Assets and Children’s Educational Outcomes: Implications for Theory, Policy and Intervention, CSD Working Papers No. 11-08, 2011, Center for Social Development: George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St. Louis, 2011, p. 3.)

http://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/WP11-08.pdf

Scott Jaschik described a paper to be presented by Benjamin L. Castleman and Lindsay C. Page, both education doctoral students at Harvard, which indicated “. . . significant summer melt for such students, especially those planning to enroll at community colleges.” Tracking high school students from two databases, including one from the ACCESS college preparation program serving low-income students in Boston and another national database in the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002, Castelman and Page discovered that 22% of the ACCESS students “melted” between their high school graduation and enrollment date. According to the authors, “The figures varied significantly based on the college to which students expected to enroll: melt was 19 percent for four-year institutions and 37 percent for community colleges. The lower students’ income is, the more likely they are to melt.” (Scott Jaschik, “The Other ‘Summer Melt’ in Admissions,” Inside Higher Ed, April 4, 2011.)

http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/04/04/new_research_points_to_a_summer_melt_issue_for_low_income_students

Some support factors were found to be correlated with actual matriculation. As the study noted,

In looking at characteristics of the students who enroll and those who don’t, the research found strong impact of parents and peers. Students who ‘talked frequently with their parents about college’ are 7 percentage points more likely to enroll than are those who talked only infrequently
with their parents. The researchers also found ‘strong and positive association’ between the proportion of a student’s friends with college plans and college enrollment. If most of a student’s friends plan to enroll, the student is 14.2 percentage points more likely to enroll. (Scott Jaschik, “The Other ‘Summer Melt’ in Admissions,” Inside Higher Ed, April 4, 2011.)

Based on their findings, Castleman and Page suggested proactive activities for secondary guidance personnel to counteract wilt; indeed, they indicated “. . . that high school counselors need to stay in touch with low-income students over the summer, to be alert for signs of melt so that intervention is possible.” Noting, in this regard, “. . . that the most effective counselors in the summer between high school and college will be those who already have a relationship with the students,” the pair of doctoral students “. . . also suggest the use of social networking as a way to stay in touch with these students and help them deal with last-minute obstacles to enrollment.” (Scott Jaschik, “The Other ‘Summer Melt’ in Admissions,” Inside Higher Ed, April 4, 2011.)

Money, of course, is not irrelevant to the summer melt or wilt of low-income students. A 2011 article about South Carolina related to this point, as it reported: “Finance is a big part of it,” said Charles N. Smith, S.C. State’s vice president for student affairs. “In our case, a lot of it comes down to whether students can afford it. We have a lot of students who are seeking that financial-aid dollar.” (Wayne Washington, “As would-be students ‘melt,’ colleges try to keep cool,” The State, July 5, 2011.)

As Wayne Washington reported (in the article just cited), “Tuition increases, which often are approved in spring or early summer, also can complicate the financial picture for students, sometimes adding hundreds of dollars to what they have to pay.” Washington again quoted vice president Smith of South Caroline State as saying: “For some parents, especially first-generation (college) parents, when you add another $600 or $700, it ends up being a real challenge for them,” Smith said. “They thought they were going to pay one thing, and they end up needing to pay something else.” (Wayne Washington, “As would-be students ‘melt,’ colleges try to keep cool,” The State, July 5, 2011.)

11.8 The expression “saving for college” has been oft-used, by parents and students. Now, it can also be viewed as a possible correlate for which kids matriculate to higher education. According to writer Caralee Adams, who commented the following about a study to appear in the Journal of Children and Poverty: “New research says that children with savings accounts in their
own name are six times more likely to attend college than those who don’t.” (Caralee Adams, “Early Lessons in Saving Improve Odds for College Success,” Education Week: College Bound, April 29, 2011.)


Per Adams’ post, this link was indicated: “A review of 38 studies found a positive link between household assets and children’s educational success, according to research by the College Savings Institute, an initiative of the Center for Social Development and the New America Foundation to increase access to college for low- and moderate-income students.” (Caralee Adams, “Early Lessons in Saving Improve Odds for College Success,” Education Week: College Bound, April 29, 2011.)


Indeed, the researchers state that “More than half of children (55%) who do not have savings of their own experience wilt.”—that is, they do not matriculate after intending to do so. (William Elliott III, Mesmin Destin, and Terri Friedline, Taking Stock of Ten Years of Research on the Relationship between Assets and Children’s Educational Outcomes: Implications for Theory, Policy and Intervention, CSD Working Papers No. 11-08, 2011, Center for Social Development: George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St. Louis, 2011, p. 3.) http://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/WP11-08.pdf

Chapter 12: Academic Preparation
12.1. “Keeping schools open from dawn to dusk, six days a week — offering youngsters a raft of medical, social and psychological supports, academic help, sports and activities — also has a demonstrable effect on academics. For starters, “community schools” keep kids off the streets after school — that’s critical, because the amount of time young people hang out on street corners with their friends is a better predictor of failure in school than family income.”—David L. Kirp, “There are ways to bridge the achievement gap in schools,” The Vindicator, October 19, 2010, p. A11. http://www.vindy.com/news/2010/oct/19/there-are-ways-to-bridge-the-achievement/?newswatch

As for academic preparation, it is important to emphasize those measures found effective in reducing the achievement gap. As David Kirp summarized them,

Good preschools, smaller elementary school classes, a focus on reading, altering attitudes about intelligence, linking schools to their communities and paying attention to character-building — there’s nothing pie-in-the-sky in this agenda. If these crib-to-college reforms shift the public conversation away from ‘you can’t educate these kids’ fatalism and toward investing in what’s been shown to work, the biggest achievement gap may finally start to shrink. (David L. Kirp, “There are ways to bridge the achievement gap in schools,” The Vindicator, October 19, 2010, p. A11.) http://www.vindy.com/news/2010/oct/19/there-are-ways-to-bridge-the-achievement/?newswatch

I am occasionally asked what courses high school students need for college; I respond—with only slight exaggeration—“four years of everything.” That’s not just my view; according to Carol Frey, writer in the U.S. News Best Colleges 2011,

... Educators do agree on the courses that students should take in high school: four years of English at the college-preparation level; four years of science including two lab sciences; four years of social sciences such as history and economics; and, increasingly, four years of math. If you take a year off from math, when you take your college math placement exam, you could find yourself in a remedial class that doesn’t qualify for financial aid or count toward graduation,’ warns Jacqueline King, who directs the American Council on Education’s Center for Policy Analysis. To be ready for the college-level algebra required of most freshmen, for example, means taking algebra I and II courses and trigonometry in high school. (Carol Frey, “Crash Course in Preparedness,” U.S. News & World Report, September 2010, p. 38.) http://www.usnews.com/education/articles/2010/08/16/a-crash-course-in-college-preparedness
To be sure, additional coursework in music and art as well as various electives are also a benefit to students aspiring to attend college—and be successful there.

Massachusetts recently increased its mathematics requirement for students seeking places in state universities. According to an article in *The Boston Globe*,


**12.2.** Another recommendation on academic preparation came from the *Roadmap* for Latinos, discussed earlier; it stated:

**Support a rigorous public high school curriculum that prepares all students, including those traditionally underserved, to succeed.** [emphasis in original] Data show limited academic preparation for postsecondary education for too many high school graduates. . . . Providing academic rigor in middle and high school courses and effectively monitoring student progress in core courses for any necessary interventions are important strategies for increasing their higher education access, retention and completion. (*Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion*, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 16.) [http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap](http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap)

The Latino *Roadmap* also proposed the following in regard to college readiness:

**Develop partnerships between school districts and higher education institutions designed to improve the college-readiness and participation rates of high school graduates.** [emphasis in original]
The alignment between the high school curriculum offered and academic preparation for college is off track in too many communities where Latinos are enrolled. Partnerships between school districts and colleges within a community to align college access and preparation through curriculum, course, and assessment alignment can be helpful, particularly for students entering their senior year of high school. *(Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 13.)*

http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

Finally, the *Roadmap* offered this proposal to strengthen the academic preparation of Latinos:

**Increase early college high schools and dual enrollment programs.** [emphasis in original] The academic preparation and college-readiness of Latino students can be strengthened to increase college access and persistence. Several recent studies have shown early college high schools and dual enrollment programs in communities with large Latino populations are creating the opportunities for students to earn college course credits while still in high school (often without expense to the student) by having institutions work with nearby school districts to provide these course offerings. Entering college with academic credits lowers the total college expenses for the student’s family and can shorten the time to degree attainment if courses are accepted towards degree completion. *(Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 15.)*

http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

12.3 Anthony Cabrera and the Penn State researchers investigated correlations among socioeconomic status (SES), academic preparation—which they termed “academic resources”—and the choice of postsecondary educational institution. According to their study,

Securing different levels of academic preparation and choosing institutions of postsecondary education varies as one examines a student’s socioeconomic status. Twenty-five percent of all Lowest-SES students secure high academic resources. Moreover, only 30% of Lowest-SES students first enrolled at 4-year institution regardless of academic resources. In contrast to the case of Lowest-SES students, 59% of students from the Highest SES background obtained high academic resources. Additionally, 58% of all Highest-SES students first entered a 4-year institution regardless of their academic resources. *(Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 3.)* http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf
The importance of the correlation between “academic resources” and success in college is seen in the completion data—per “Institutional Choice paths”—noted by Cabrera, et al. As they stated:

Academic Resources-Institutional Choice paths vary in their likelihood to produce a 4-year degree. In the aggregate, successful pathways to a bachelor’s degree appear to follow a logical progression: students that obtain the highest academic preparation and enter a 4-year institution tend to secure a 4-year degree. Those students who are poorly qualified and choose institutions other than colleges and universities see their chances to graduate diminished. Seventy-eight percent of those students who pursued the first path graduated within 10 years. In contrast, just 2.3% of those who were poorly qualified and entered at 2-year institutions graduated in the same timeframe. Although enrolling in a 4-year institution exerts a powerful effect, academic preparation seems to provide better chances to graduate from college regardless of port of entry. Even when students begin their post-secondary careers in the 2-year sector, those that are highly prepared have a 30% chance to earn a 4-year degree. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, pp. 2-3.)

http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Chapter 13: Information

13.1. Regarding information about college, the Roadmap for Latinos recommended the following:

Inform parents and family members about the pathway to college and provide support to students to attain a degree. [emphasis in original] Almost half of Latino students are the first in their family to attend college and over one-third live off-campus and at home with their parents. Therefore, information about how to prepare and pay for college should be provided early and often to students. Given almost half of Latino college students are the first in their family to go to college, the awareness of the education system and process for accessing college may be limited. Effective programs by community-based organizations and others to inform parents and families early and often in the education process increases preparation, access, and choice in postsecondary education. (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 12.)

http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

The Latino Roadmap also proposed this regarding information to increase both access and success:

Establish or expand community partnerships to compliment institutional efforts to increase students’ access to and success in
postsecondary education. Community partnerships play a role in student retention, completion and success. Community organizations can provide services such as childcare, transportation assistance, special tutoring schools cannot afford to provide. They can help students who face high barriers to completion. (Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 13.)
http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

13.2. We have data on students’ information about college from The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, conducted by Harris Interactive in the fall of 2010 on a national sample “... of middle and high school teachers, students, parents of public school students, and business executives from Fortune 1000 companies ...” (MetLife Survey, Overview) http://www.metlife.com/about/corporate-profile/citizenship/metlife-foundation/metlife-survey-of-the-american-teacher.html

The following results regarding when students are informed about college were noted in that survey [emphasis in original]:

**Most students are not getting the information they need to go to college in time for that information to be most effective.** Eight in ten or more middle school students have not spoken with a teacher (79%) or school counselor (84%) about what classes they should take or other things they should do to be ready for college, have not seen examples of real college-level assignments and student work (81%), have not visited a college (81%) or have not had a college student visit their school to speak with them and other students about college (87%). (The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, Part 1: Clearing the Path, p. 21.)

As the survey findings stated, “It is not until grades 11 or 12 that a majority of students have had these experiences: spoken with a teacher (70%) or school counselor (76%) about what classes they should take or other things they should do to be ready for college, seen examples of real college-level assignments and student work (57%), visited a college (53%) or had a college student visit their school to speak with them and other students about college (52%).” (The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, Part 1: Clearing the Path, p. 21.)

Survey items addressed students who are the first in their family to seek college access. The results indicated the following about these “first-gens”:
There is some indication that schools are sensitive to the needs of ‘first-generation college goers’—students whose parents have not graduated college themselves. Students whose parents have no more than a high school education are more likely than those who have a parent who is a college graduate to have visited a college (41% vs. 34%) or to have had a college student visit their school (36% vs. 30%). *(The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, Part 1: Clearing the Path, p. 21.)*

Regarding students’ *expectations* for college, the survey results were revealing, as they stated:

*Most students believe they understand what they need to do to succeed in college.* Nine in ten students (88%) agree that they understand what they need to do to succeed in college, including 44% who strongly agree. Six in ten students rate their school as excellent (19%) or good (42%) at providing information to them about what it means to be ready for college and a career. A similar number rate their school as excellent (18%) or good (41%) in providing information to them about what the requirements are to succeed in college. *(The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, Part 1: Clearing the Path, p. 21.)*

When it comes to *specific* information, and when students received it, results were less positive—particularly, for middle-school students. According to survey results:

*Many students and parents need more information about the requirements to get into, pay for and succeed in college, particularly during middle school.* One-third of high school students (35%) rate their school as fair or poor on providing information on the requirements to succeed in college, compared to 52% of middle school students. Students who say they will go to college are less likely than others to rate their school low in this area (37% vs. 59% of those who do not plan on going beyond high school), and students who have considered dropping out of school are more likely than others to rate their school low (70% vs. 37%). *(The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, Part 1: Clearing the Path, p. 21.)*

As for their *sources* of information, some illuminating results were also found. According to these responses:
**For most groups of students, teachers are one of their top two sources of information on what success in college requires.** The top sources of information on college success for middle school students are parents (83%), teachers (76%) and school counselors (48%). At the high school level, the same proportion of students relies on teachers (76%), fewer rely on parents (66%) and more rely on school counselors (65%). High school students also make broader use of other sources including college websites (56% vs. 31% of middle school students), friends (40% vs. 33% of middle school students) and current college students (38% vs. 26% of middle school students). School counselors are more likely to be a source of information for high school students whose parents do not have any college education, compared to those with a parent who is a college graduate (72% vs. 59%). High school students whose parents have no college education are less likely than those who have college-educated parents to use their parents as a resource (49% vs. 81%). Student reliance on teachers is similar regardless of their parents’ level of education. *(The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Preparing Students for College and Careers, Part 1: Clearing the Path, p. 24.)*


**Chapter 14: Success**

14.1. **When it comes to “success” in college, we usually think of graduation or completion of a program (e.g., earning a degree or certificate).** Typically, the most selective colleges—that is, those schools having the highest admission standards, taking mainly students with strong grade-point averages, class-ranks, and ACT or SAT scores—graduate the highest percentage of their students.

“Retention rate” is regarded as an important statistic relating to student success in college. According to the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, a college’s retention rate is "the percentage of first-time students who are seeking bachelor’s degrees who return to the institution to continue their studies the following fall." To discover the retention rate of a U.S. college or university, click the link below, then type in the school’s name to search for it; finally, click on "retention and graduation rates." [http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/)

To see the retention rates of students admitted to colleges with varying rates of selectivity, consult the ACT report *National Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates* at this link: [http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/retain_2009.pdf](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/retain_2009.pdf)

Insofar as *why* students may not succeed in college, there are a number of reasons often cited. But a recent survey by Public Agenda, underwritten by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, of over 600 young adults (ages 22 to 30) who had completed
some college, belied common myths in suggesting the prime cause. According to its findings:

The number one reason students give for leaving school is the fact that they had to work and go to school at the same time and, despite their best efforts, the stress of trying to do both eventually took its toll. More than half of those who left higher ed before completing a degree or a certificate say that the ‘need to work and make money’ while attending classes is the major reason they left. Balancing work and school was an even bigger barrier than finding money for tuition. Those who dropped out are almost twice as likely to cite problems juggling work and school as their main problem as they are to blame tuition bills (54 percent to 31 percent). (Jean Johnson, Jon Rochkind, Amber N. Ott, and Samantha DuPont, With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College, Public Agenda, December 2009, p. 5.)


Other “realities” cited regarding lack of completion were the following:

Young people who fail to finish college are often going it alone financially. They’re essentially putting themselves through school. (Jean Johnson, Jon Rochkind, Amber N. Ott, and Samantha DuPont, With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College, Public Agenda, December 2009, p. 9.)


Among students who don’t graduate, the college selection process is far more limited and often seems happenstance and uninformed. (Jean Johnson, Jon Rochkind, Amber N. Ott, and Samantha DuPont, With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College, Public Agenda, December 2009, p. 12.)


Indeed, the report found that “Those who did not complete are more likely than those who completed college to have selected their school based on convenience rather than academics.” (Jean Johnson, Jon Rochkind, Amber N. Ott, and Samantha DuPont, With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College, Public Agenda, December 2009, p. 13.)


Tamar Lewin, reporting on this study in The New York Times, emphasized the importance of students’ financial and familial situation, saying this about the findings:

Among those who dropped out, nearly six in 10 were getting no help from their parents in paying tuition. Among those who got degrees, more than six in 10 have help from their family in paying tuition. About seven in 10
of the dropouts said they had no scholarship or loan aid; among those who got degrees, only about four in 10 went without such aid. (Tamar Lewin, “Study Sheds Light on Students Leaving College Early,” The New York Times, December 9, 2009.)


Lewin further underscored the income and family backgrounds of these students, who finished or did not finish a degree, as she noted:

Among those who completed a degree, 72 percent had household incomes above $35,000. Among the dropouts, more than half had household incomes below $35,000. And while 7 in 10 of the college graduates had parents who had completed at least some college work, 4 in 10 of the dropouts had parents who had not gone beyond a high school diploma. (Tamar Lewin, “Study Sheds Light on Students Leaving College Early,” The New York Times, December 9, 2009.)


14.2. A key factor in college academic success, at the micro level, appears to be how successful the student had been in high school. Our study of both the college graduates and the non-degreed former MVCAP advisees from the high school Class of 2004 who were still enrolled in college during 2008 indicated as much. Indeed, for those 78 (of 568) students who had already earned their two- or four-year degree in 2008, the average [high school] GPA was 3.58; the average ACT composite score was 23.47. (In fact, for these graduates, only 5 had GPAs lower than 3.0 and but 9 had ACT composites lower than 20.) For those students who had not yet earned their two- or four year degree in 2008, but who were still enrolled in college, the average [high school] GPA was 3.08; the average ACT composite score was 20.68.

These findings suggested what might be viewed as a “common-sense” hypothesis: those high school graduates who matriculate and continue in pursuit of their degree will have been “good students” in high school; those who graduate from college in four years will have been even stronger students in high school. http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/9-results-from-class-of-2004.html

A related important factor in an individual’s academic success would seem to be that student’s ability to study and his or her study-habits. As preparation for college, however, surveys indicate that, on average, high school students do not study very much. Washington Post education writer Jay Mathews offered his findings in that regard: “I cited time diaries collected by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research showing that 15- to 17-year-olds in 2002 and 2003 devoted about 3 ½ hours a day to TV and other
leisure while their average time spent studying was 42 minutes. I pointed out that the annual UCLA Higher Education Research Institute survey of college freshmen shows about two-thirds did an hour or less of homework a night in high school.” (Jay Mathews, “Why ‘Race to Nowhere’ documentary is wrong,” The Washington Post—Class Struggle, April 3, 2011.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/class-struggle/post/why-race-to-nowhere-documentary-is-wrong/2011/04/03/AFBt27VC_blog.html

We often assume there is a correlation between studying and learning. Indeed, one of the most-commonly accepted principles of instruction is to achieve high “time-on-task” to enhance students’ likelihood of achieving. A review of a recent study on learning in college cites the finding that “Students who study by themselves for more hours each week gain more knowledge.” (Scott Jaschik, “'Academically Adrift,'” Inside Higher Ed, January 18, 2011.) http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/01/18/study_finds_large_numbers_of_college_students_don_t_learn_much?loc=interstitialskip

The authors of this study indicated students “. . . report that they spend increasing numbers of hours on nonacademic activities, including working, rather than on studying. They enroll in courses that do not require substantial reading or writing assignments; they interact with their professors outside of classrooms rarely, if ever; and they define and understand their college experiences as being focused more on social than on academic development.” (Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010, excerpt pp. 121-25.) http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/028569.html

Other research indicates college students aren’t studying as much as they once did. Indeed, in looking at hours spent studying over time, economists Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks from the University of California Santa Barbara concluded the following regarding this decreased study-time:

. . . Full-time students at four-year colleges in the U.S. are investing much less time in academics than they once did. Full-time college students in 1961 allocated about 40 hours per week toward class and studying, whereas full-time students in 2003 invested about 27 hours per week. Decreased academic time investment is observable in a wide range of subsamples—across all observable demographic groups and all types of four-year colleges. (Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks, “The Falling Time Cost of College: Evidence from Half a Century of Time Use Data,” March 24, 2010, p. 19.) http://www.econ.ucsb.edu/~babcock/College_time_use_NBER.pdf

In addition, Babcock and Marks examined other correlations, finding that, with some exceptions

--Higher parental education, being female and not working are all associated with higher study times in 2003 ((Philip Babcock and Mindy
“Interestingly,” the authors noted, “women used to study about the same amount as men, but study more than men in recent cohorts. Engineering students studied more than other students and the gap has widened.” (Philip Babcock and Mindy Marks, “The Falling Time Cost of College: Evidence from Half a Century of Time Use Data,” March 24, 2010, p. 15.)
http://www.econ.ucsb.edu/~babcock/College_time_use_NBER.pdf

If college students aren’t studying as much, what other factors might affect their chances of success? A study presented to the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) at its annual convention in March 2011 by Todd Wyatt, doctoral student at George Mason U., indicated the following: “Alongside time spent studying outside of class, alcohol consumption is the most significant predictor of a student’s grade point average. It has more impact than working, watching television, online social networking — even attending class.” (Allie Greengrass, “Study: Spare time, drinking factors into school performance,” USA Today, March 30, 2011.) http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2011-03-30-spare-time-academics-drinking_N.htm

To enhance a student’s chances of success, Wyatt emphasized the importance of tutoring, stating “... The most important thing to take away from his research is the importance of effective tutoring.” Wyatt indicated: "Although tutoring has been proven time and time again," he said, "it's a really hard nut to crack, simply because students resist it almost like it’s a sickness. They see it almost as a punishment." (Allie Greengrass, “Study: Spare time, drinking factors into school performance,” USA Today, March 30, 2011.) http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2011-03-30-spare-time-academics-drinking_N.htm

Thus, at the risk of being glib, it seems that to improve a student’s likelihood of success at college, he or she should study more, party less, and take advantage of tutoring!

Lynn O’Shaughnessy posted “5 Great Ways to Succeed in College” on her website for CBS MoneyWatch; her five tips were these:
1. Attend classes.
2. Study more hours.
3. Join a study group.
4. Use tutors.
5. Choose a major you love. (Lynn O'Shaughnessy, “5 Great Ways to Succeed in College,” CBS MoneyWatch, July 12, 2011.)

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/spending/blog/college-solution/5-great-ways-to-succeed-in-college/5950/?tag=coll1;blog-river

14.3. “Moreover, we find that learning in higher education is characterized by persistent and/or growing inequality. There are significant differences in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills when comparing groups of students from different family backgrounds and racial/ethnic groups. More important, not only do students enter college with unequal demonstrated abilities, but their inequalities tend to persist—or, in the case of African-American students relative to white students, increase—while they are enrolled in higher education.”--Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010, excerpt pp. 121-25. http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/028569.html

What are other recommendations to increase the chances of success in college for underrepresented students? The Latino Roadmap report suggested the following [emphasis in original]:

**Increase student retention efforts for working students in good standing.** The majority of Latino college students work while enrolled. Given changes in the economy, more students in good standing encounter shifts in their work schedules after they begin a semester that can decrease their retention or the quality of education they receive. *(Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 14.)*
http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

**Require a simplified transfer pathway to colleges and universities.** About half of all Latino undergraduates are enrolled in two-year institutions. Unfortunately, too few complete an associate degree or transfer to a college/university. To encourage completion of an associate degree and continuation to a bachelor degree, the confusing pathway to transfer from one institution to another should be simplified. *(Roadmap for Ensuring America’s Future By Increasing Latino College Completion, Excelencia in Education, March 2011, p. 16.)*
http://www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/Roadmap

Transfers are important since, according to a 2011 study released by the U.S. Department of Education, “two in three postsecondary education students attend two or more institutions of higher education before obtaining a

14.4. Another proposal to help students be successful in college focuses on “success indicators” or “intermediate measures of success” (e.g., “basic skills acquisition and the completion of a specific number of credits or particular gateway courses”) as opposed to “milestones that must be attained in order to get to completion.” (Jeremy Offenstein and Nancy Shulock, Taking the Next Step: The Promise of Intermediate Methods for Meeting Postsecondary Completion Goals, Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, September 2010, p. ii.) http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/ATD_TakingtheNextStep_092810.pdf

To quote Jeremy Offenstein and Nancy Shulock, researchers at California State University, “Academic behaviors that have been shown to correlate with success and that fall into this category of measure include completing college math within the first two years, enrolling in a summer session, and minimizing late registration and course withdrawals.” (Jeremy Offenstein and Nancy Shulock, Taking the Next Step: The Promise of Intermediate Methods for Meeting Postsecondary Completion Goals, Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, September 2010, p. 5.) http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/ATD_TakingtheNextStep_092810.pdf

Per Clifford Adelman, Senior Research Analyst in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education, the number of credits earned during the first year of college is an important marker for college success. As he noted: “Less than 20 credits by the end of the first calendar year of enrollment (no matter in what term one started, whether summer, fall, winter, spring) is a serious drag on degree completion.” (Clifford Adelman, The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006. p. xx.) http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/toolbox.pdf

An additional focus is the time students require to finish college. Per a posting on The Chronicle of Education, Sarah Turner, professor of economics and education at UVA, addressed a conference on this issue in October 2010. According to Turner, “from the 1970s to the 1990s, the proportion of students who completed a bachelor’s degree in four years shrank by 13 percentage points . . . . These days earning a bachelor’s degree takes at least five years, Ms. Turner said. The decline, however, was found mostly at public four-year universities that are not flagship institutions, she said. In fact, at highly selective private institutions, the number of students completing their degrees in four years increased by 8 percent between 1972 and 1992.” ‘This is very much a story of stratification,’ Ms. Turner said.” One reason for the longer time to complete degrees, Turner suggested, is “students today often find it hard to finance their educations and have to work during college. Work is
crowding students' time to take courses.” (Jennifer Gonzalez, “Helping Students Complete Degrees On Time,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 6, 2010.)

Stan Jones, president of the nonprofit organization Complete College America, spoke at the same conference; according to a report by Jennifer Gonzalez, he noted that “. . . institutions were not designed for working students, a group he called the ‘emerging new majority.’ Working students tend not to have strong high-school backgrounds and usually attend college part time rather than full time, he said. ‘Yet we put them into the same system as other students and are disappointed that we don’t get good results.’ Mr. Jones advocates scheduling classes in a convenient block of time to make it easier for students with work and family commitments to attend and help them graduate faster.” (Jennifer Gonzalez, “Helping Students Complete Degrees On Time,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 6, 2010.)

http://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/cc-toolkit.pdf Furthermore, according to a post by Eric Hoover on a 2011 Indiana University report regarding college enrollment during The Great Recession, the proportion of recent high school graduates matriculating to community colleges grew; Hoover stated:

In 2006, 41.7 percent of traditional-age students enrolled at two-year colleges; in 2009, 44.5 percent did so. Between 2008 and 2009, enrollments of traditional-age, first-time students at two-year colleges increased by 8.3 percent.

The report suggests that this trend was driven by two groups of students: those who, in a better economy, might have chosen to attend other (and costlier) types of institutions, and those who otherwise would have joined the work force after graduating from high school. (Eric Hoover, “Recession Reshaped College Enrollment Patterns, but the Sky Didn’t Fall,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, July 14, 2011.)
http://chronicle.com/article/Recession-Reshaped-College/128223/

The IU report itself, under a section entitled “Community College Increases Drove Enrollment Trends,” stated matter-of-factly the following: “The changes that were seen among student cohorts during the years examined were largely the result of increases in community college enrollment, showing a characteristic ‘crested wave’ — rising through 2009 and then declining slightly in 2010.” (Afet Dadashova, et al., Signature Report National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends: Before, During, and After the Great Recession, National Student Clearinghouse Research
Unfortunately, according to a 2004 federal report, “approximately 60 percent of those students are referred to at least one remedial or developmental education course—and less than a quarter of those ultimately receive a degree or certificate.” (J. Wirt, et al., The Condition of Education of Education 2004, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics in College Completion Tool Kit, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, March 2011, p. 8.)


A June 2011 report by Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow and Emily Schneider for the nonprofit and nonpartisan research organization MDRC summarized the downbeat completion data on community colleges—and their students—in this way:

Enrolling over one-third of all postsecondary education students, community colleges have become a centerpiece of America’s efforts in recent years to improve the quality of its workforce and maintain its competitiveness in the global market. However, community colleges have often struggled to graduate their students, with just over three in ten community college students earning a degree or credential within six years of first enrolling. Over half of these students are academically underprepared for college-level work, and improving the success of these developmental, or remedial, students is one of the greatest challenges that community colleges face in the efforts to increase overall graduation rates — very few of these students end up completing their required sequence of developmental coursework needed to enroll in college-level courses, let alone graduating from college with a diploma or certificate. (Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow and Emily Schneider, Unlocking the Gate: What We Know About Improving Developmental Education, MDRC, June 2011, p. ES-1.) http://www.mdrc.org/publications/601/full.pdf

Another 2011 study reinforced these observations, indicating that “. . . only 30% of students who enroll at California’s Inland Empire Community Colleges will graduate.” Regarding transfer students, the study noted, “. . . only 20% of them will go on to study in four-year settings.” According to a posting on the report, students—particularly, those from underrepresented groups—had difficulty succeeding in California community colleges; this post stated:

The report shows that 70% of students who enrolled in a California community College still had not completed a degree or a certificate or transferred to a four-year school after 6 years. When the data was broken down by race, it showed that the number of Latino and black students who failed to achieve any of the above objectives was between 75% and 80%. (“Study: California Community College Completion Rate Low,” EducationNews.org, April 13, 2011.)
Blogger Lynn O’Shaughnessy offered tips to help students succeed in community colleges. Her suggestions included checking out schools in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, paying attention to transferring credits, asking about articulation agreements with four-year institutions to facilitate transfer, seeking tutoring when necessary, considering on-campus housing (if available), and looking into “honors colleges”; as she stated: “A community college with an honors component can be a great alternative for smart students who are strapped for money....” (Lynn O’Shaughnessy, 7 Ways to Succeed in Community College, CBS MoneyWatch, October 5, 2010.)

Writer Ron Lieber discussed the money-saving aspect of enrolling in a community college and then transferring to a 4-year school. Nonetheless, as he cautioned, “time is money;” as he put it, Merely deciding to attend community college does not guarantee that you will save money. If the goal is to earn a bachelor’s degree in four years, anything that goes wrong along the way, like taking the wrong classes or getting a bad grade in a required class, means extra semesters and extra expenses.” (Ron Lieber, “Bargains on the First Four Semesters,” The New York Times, April 8, 2011.)

Unfortunately, efforts to help community college students—particularly, those who are at-risk—to succeed have not always produced significant results on a national level. An independent evaluation of the initiative “Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count,” begun in 2004 by the Lumina Foundation for Education, concluded the following:

Trends in student outcomes remained relatively unchanged, with a few exceptions. [emphasis in original] On average, after Achieving the Dream was introduced, colleges saw modest improvements in the percentage of students completing gatekeeper college English courses and courses completed. In contrast, students’ persistence and the percentage of students completing developmental math, developmental English, developmental reading, and gatekeeper math courses remained substantially the same. (Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow, et al., Turning the Tide: Five Years of Achieving the Dream in Community Colleges, MDRC, February 2011, Overview.)

Chapter 15: To Beat the Odds

15.1. “A rigorous high school program yields longlasting benefits. Taking challenging academic courses not only helps students get into college, but it also increases their likelihood of succeeding.” --
Socioeconomic status (SES) matters when it comes to students accessing college and graduating. An analysis by researchers at Penn State University of a national cohort of students from 10th grade in 1980 through their postsecondary experience in 1993 quantified those odds. According to their findings,

Thirty-five percent of the members of the High School Sophomore Cohort of 1980 obtained at least a bachelor’s degree by 1993. When the socioeconomic background of the student is examined, our analyses suggest a stratification pattern whereby: Lowest-SES students have a 13% chance to graduate within 11 years. [emphasis added] The graduation rate for Highest-SES students is 57%. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. i.)

In short, low SES students without sufficient academic preparation have reduced chances of success in college. As the authors of the report *Reclaiming the American Dream* stated, “Students who lack sufficient academic preparation in high school, particularly low-income students, have exceptionally little chance of attending and completing college.” [emphasis added] (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 19.)

Unfortunately, according to that report, although low-income students often expressed the intention of going to college, they often lacked the necessary academic preparation. As *Reclaiming the American Dream* stated: “Put simply, at least one-third of all low-income students expect to go to college but do not plan to take the coursework that will enable them to pursue that path.” [emphasis in original] (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 11.)

Alberto Cabrera and the Penn State researchers analyzed what they termed “Pathways to a Four-Year Degree.” In their view, several distinct routes had existed; as they stated:

The High School Sophomore Cohort of 1980 followed nine different pathways to a 4-year degree. These paths were formed by a combination of academic resources secured in high school and the first type of postsecondary institution attended. The chance to secure a 4-year degree varies in relation to the particular pathway followed.
• The pathway most likely to lead to a 4-year degree is one defined by acquiring high academic resources in high school and entering at a 4-year institution upon high school completion. Those who followed this path had a 78% chance to graduate within 11 years.
• Most Highest-SES students followed this pathway, resulting in an 81% graduation rate.
• Most Lowest-SES student journeyed on a pathway defined by moderate academic resources and first enrollment in a 2-year institution. Only 3.3% of these students earned a 4-year degree. [emphasis added] (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 1.) http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Nonetheless, in the view of Clifford Adelman--who had first analyzed that national 1980 cohort of high school sophomores until these students were age 30 in 1993--*academic preparation* [emphasis added] could help overcome the handicap of a student’s low socioeconomic status. In his words:

> Academic Resources (the composite of high school curriculum, test scores, and class rank) produces a much steeper curve toward bachelor’s degree completion than does socioeconomic status. Students from the lowest two SES quintiles who are also in the highest Academic Resources quintile earn bachelor’s degrees at a higher rate than a majority of students from the top SES quintile. (Clifford Adelman, *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 3.) http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/NationalConf/2007/Handouts/S229H3.pdf

That senior researcher from the U.S. Department of Education also addressed the importance of academic preparation on underrepresented students. In his view, its impact was greater for such students; as he stated:


Like Adelman, Cabrera and the PSU researchers found that other factors could mitigate the effects of low SES. As they concluded:

> The 44% SES-based degree completion gap separating Lowest-SES students from Highest-SES students is reduced to 24% when a myriad of

**Therefore, despite having the odds stacked against them, some low-income students and those from underrepresented groups do matriculate and graduate from college. Several factors have been found to be most integral to their success.** A 2006 study done for The Bridgespan Group suggested the most important in no uncertain terms. As its authors, echoing Adelman, stated:

> **Academic preparation is the most effective means of increasing the odds that students will graduate from high school ready for college, matriculate, and eventually receive their degrees.** [emphasis added] Cliff Adelman, a Department of Education researcher, has found that, ‘A rigorous high school curriculum has greater impact on bachelor’s degree completion than any other pre-college indicator of academic preparation, regardless of socioeconomic status or race.’ These results have been confirmed specifically for low-income students by A. F. Cabrera, who reports that low-income students enroll and progress in college at much higher rates when they graduate high school academically-prepared. (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 4.) http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf


Adelman quantified the importance of various components of these “Academic Resources” as follows:

High school curriculum reflects 41 percent of the academic resources students bring to higher education; test scores, 30 percent; and class rank/academic GPA, 29 percent. No matter how one divides the universe of students, the curriculum measure produces a higher percent earning
bachelor’s degrees than either of the other measures. The correlation of curriculum with bachelor’s degree attainment is also higher (.54) than test scores (.48) or class rank/GPA (.44). (Clifford Adelman, *Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 3.)


**15.2.** “Reading books was found to be linked with a higher chance of students going to university. For 16-year-old children whose parents worked in admin or sales, their chance of going to university went up from 24 per cent to 35 per cent for boys and from 20 per cent to 30 per cent for girls. If they read books and also did one other cultural activity, such as playing an instrument or going to museums, the chance rose from 24 per cent to 54 per cent for boys and from 20 per cent to 48 per cent for girls.” (“Reading at 16 linked to better job prospects,” research of Oxford sociologist Mark Taylor, University of Oxford website, April 8, 2011.)

http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2011/110804.html

“Academic preparation,” “Academic Resources,” and high school curriculum have all been cited as correlates of access and success in higher education for low-income and underrepresented students. But which specific subjects have been shown to be strong predictors?

**Reading** [emphasis added] has been emphasized as important to student success, since students who don’t read well may never get to college. Indeed, a new report by of Anthony Hernandez of Hunter College links reading inability and poverty to dropping out from high school. According to Hernandez, students who have difficulty reading and are poor face “double jeopardy.” As the author noted:

Educators and researchers have long recognized the importance of mastering reading by the end of third grade. Students who fail to reach this critical milestone often falter in the later grades and drop out before earning a high school diploma. Now, researchers have confirmed this link in the first national study to calculate high school graduation rates for children at different reading skill levels and with different poverty rates. Results of a longitudinal study of nearly 4,000 students find that those who don’t read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers. For the worst readers, those couldn’t master even the basic skills by third grade, the rate is nearly six times greater. While these struggling readers account for about a third of the students, they represent more than three fifths of those who eventually drop out or fail to graduate on time. What’s more, the study shows that poverty has a powerful influence on graduation rates. **The combined effect of reading poorly and living in poverty puts**
these children in double jeopardy. [emphasis added] (Donald J. Hernandez, Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, April 2011, p. 3.)
http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/DoubleJeopardyHowThirdGradeReadingSkillsandPoverty/DoubleJeopardyReport040511FINAL.pdf

Clifford Adelman also recognized the necessity of reading to succeed. According to him, “It is a megawork in progress, much of which depends on students’ reading skills on entering high school. If students cannot read close to grade level, the biology textbook, the math problems, the history documents, the novel—all will be beyond them.” (Clifford Adelman, The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006. p. xx.)

To underscore the importance of reading, Adelman cited these data: “Thirty-nine percent of 4-year college students who were assigned to remedial reading courses completed bachelor's degrees, compared with 60 percent of students who took only one or two other types of remedial courses, and 69 percent of those who were not subject to remediation at all.” (Clifford Adelman, Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 5.)

Mathematics and science have also been identified as being important for students to succeed in college. Indeed, according to the report Reclaiming the American Dream, “The level of math taken in high school correlates strongly with a student’s likelihood of completing college, for example, with ‘the tipping point of momentum towards a bachelor’s degree now firmly above Algebra 2.’ The number of units in lab science courses is a similarly good predictor.” (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, Reclaiming the American Dream, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 4.)

Clifford Adelman also commented on the importance of mathematics for students to succeed in postsecondary education. As that researcher stated, “Of all pre-college curricula, the highest level of mathematics one studies in secondary school has the strongest continuing influence on bachelor’s degree completion. [emphasis added] Finishing a course beyond the level of Algebra 2 (for example, trigonometry or pre-calculus) more than doubles the odds that a student who enters postsecondary education will complete a bachelor’s degree.” (Clifford Adelman, Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 3.)

Similarly, Susan P. Choy emphasized the importance of a student’s math courses in high school and their chances for access to college. As she
succinctly put it: “Taking challenging mathematics courses can mitigate the effect of parents’ education on college enrollment. The association between taking a rigorous high school math curriculum and going to college is strong for all students, but especially so for those whose parents did not go beyond high school.” (Susan P. Choy, Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students, American Council on Education, 2002, p. 5.)

http://inpathways.net/access.pdf

Taking Algebra 1 before high school has often been cited as a marker for students who will pursue a rigorous mathematics sequence—and, therefore, be better prepared to access college and succeed there. Unfortunately, students differ by racial groups and gender in the percentage having Algebra 1 in junior high or middle school. An analysis of a representative sample of 37,700 high school graduates in the U.S. from 2009 showed that “48 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates, 29 percent of White graduates, 17 percent of Hispanic graduates, and 12 percent of Black graduates” had completed this course before high school. In addition, according to the report America’s High School Graduates 2009, “... a higher percentage of females than males took first-year algebra before high school (27 percent versus 25 percent).” (America’s High School Graduates: Results of the 2009 NAEP High School Transcript Study, U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, 2011, p. 46-47.)


In reaction to this 2011 report, Cliff Adelman was quoted re-emphasizing the importance of high school curriculum, as he stated: “The academic intensity of one’s high school curriculum is the highest-octane component of academic resources, far more important than grades or test scores," he said. "Take the courses, make the effort, and the test scores will follow." (Caralee J. Adams, “NAEP Study Finds Jump in Students Taking Tough Courses,” Education Week, April 14, 2011.)

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/04/13/28naep.h30.html?tkn=VMNFVQiCEYyVilIlgN2hUhPEhS%2FmeHlqKpz&cmp=clp-edweek

15.3. “What this means is that recruitment efforts have to insure that students enter postsecondary education immediately following high school graduation. The longer students wait, the less likely they will finish a degree.” (Clifford Adelman, The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006. p. xx.)


At-risk students who beat the odds have aspirations to access college and succeed. In short, they expect to matriculate and graduate. A study done in 2003 for The Brooking Institution noted as much; as its authors stated: “Students who expect to attend college are more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in postsecondary school than students with similar abilities and family background characteristics who expect to obtain only a high school

This aspiration to matriculate influences students in their selection of courses—which enhances their academic preparation for college. The 2006 report Reclaiming the American Dream indicated this expectation: “Our analysis found that when a student expects to take a college-prep curriculum, there is a significant beneficial effect.” (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, Reclaiming the American Dream, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 11.) http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf

The researchers at Penn State University also summarized the effect on students in the 1988 high school sophomore cohort of aspirations to matriculate as well as the correlation of socioeconomic status (SES) with these aspirations. As they stated:

Aspiring for a 4-year college degree as early as the 8th grade enables middle school students, high school students, and their families to ready themselves for college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Students aspiring for at least a 4-year degree are predisposed to take the appropriate course curriculum, complete high school, apply to college, enroll, and eventually graduate (e.g., Adelman, 1999 and Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). Some research indicates SES can moderate degree aspirations. While examining degree aspirations among 1988 middle school students, Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal (2001) found a difference of 29% between Lowest-SES and Highest-SES students’ aspirations for at least a college degree. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 21.) http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Alberto Cabrera and the other Penn State researchers quantified their findings on students’ aspirations to access and success—specifically, underscoring its importance as a correlate; in addition, they indicated the moderating effect of SES. As they concluded:

Aspiring for a college degree is a good predictor of eventual college degree completion. Across all SES quartiles, students with college degree aspirations while still in high school were 26% more likely to do so, as compared with students without such aspirations. SES moderates the effect of collegiate aspirations. While all students benefit from this factor, Middle Low-SES students benefit the most. Lowest-SES students holding degree aspirations while in high school increase their chances of completing a degree by 17%. Middle Low-SES, Middle High-SES, and Highest-SES students increase their degree completion chances by 38%, 20%, and 28%, respectively. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven
The PSU team further quantified these aspirations among students by SES, noting differences among them, in this way:

As is the case for the 1988 middle school student cohort, we find significant SES based differences in aspiring for a 4-year degree among 1982 High School graduates who entered post secondary education during the 1982-83 academic year ($r = .335$). As the SES level increases, so does the chance to develop college degree aspirations by the senior year in high school. The SES-based gap in degree aspirations is astounding. [emphasis added] Seventy percent of the Lowest-SES students who attended postsecondary education did not aspire for a college degree while a high school senior. This pattern is reversed among Highest-SES students, whereby 74% of them had developed college aspirations before entering postsecondary education. In other words, Lowest-SES students were 44% less likely to aspire to a four degree than Highest-SES students. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 21.)

The authors of *Reclaiming the American Dream* offered a most important insight from their study, as they emphasized the importance of a belief the student had that a college degree was essential to achieving their career plans. As the researchers stated:

Every variable we studied in the category of college expectations had a statistically significant effect on college completion. Nevertheless, one in particular stood out: the student’s expectation that he or she would need a bachelor’s degree to pursue the career he or she wished to have at age 30. [emphasis added] When this expectation was in place, a student had a 46 percentage point higher rate of obtaining a bachelor’s degree. This number is astonishing and, in effect, binary: students who make the connection between college and career graduate at a rate of 55%; those who don’t at a rate of 9%. In other words, even when academic preparation is held constant, high school graduates who subscribe to this belief are more than six times as likely to earn their bachelor’s degrees. (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 11.)

15.4. Another correlate of at-risk students who beat the odds to access college and succeed is often the support they receive—from parents, high
school staff, and friends. Alberto Cabrera and the Penn State researchers noted this in their 2003 study. As they explained:

Development of degree aspirations as early as the 8th grade, securing high school academic qualifications, applying for college, and successful adjustment to college are related to the extent to which the student receives encouragement from parents, high school personal [sic], and important high school friends (e.g., Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1992; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Flint, 1992; Hossler, Schmitt & Vesper, 1999). This type of encouragement takes different forms, including from motivational support, saving for college, and being involved in school activities (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). **Encouragement is key for subsequent college enrollment.** Perna (2000), for instance, noted that parental involvement in school activities predicts whether the student would enroll at a 4-year college or university following high school graduation. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 19.)

(Cabrera, et al. quantified the correlation of support by parents or friends to a student’s success in college. As they summarized:

Encouragement matters in a student’s chances of getting a college degree. Irrespective of SES, students who received encouragement from parents and friends to pursue a college degree while in high school were more likely to complete this goal. Compared with students whose parents did not encourage them to pursue a college degree, those who did receive parental encouragement increased their chance of degree completion by 5%. The impact of high school peer encouragement is similar, increasing degree completion chances by 6%. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 20.)

Importantly, whether a student’s friends were headed for college seemed to correlate with their own matriculation. According to the authors of the 2006 report *Reclaiming the American Dream*, this factor mattered, as follows:

In the general category of culture and social supports, the factor most likely to bump up a student’s odds of completing college was having a significant portion of friends who were also planning to attend college. [emphasis added] Having friends who “value learning” also improves the odds, although the effects are less pronounced. These findings reinforce the views of the American Council on Education, which reports that students are four times more likely to enroll in college if a majority of
their friends also plan to attend than if their friends do not. Put simply, cohorts of students matter. (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, Reclaiming the American Dream, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 11.) http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf


Cabrera and the Penn State researchers also linked and quantified support with a student’s SES; they noted:

Our analysis of the 1982 High School Class reveals that a student’s likelihood to receive encouragement to secure a college degree from parents, high school personnel, and high school friends was related to his/her socioeconomic background. As a whole, Highest-SES students received more encouragement, while the reverse is true for Lowest-SES students. [emphasis added] This encouragement-SES association ranged from .13 to .248. Ninety three percent of Highest-SES students reported their parents encouraged them to pursue a college degree. In contrast, 69% of Lowest-SES students were similarly encouraged. While 77% of Highest-SES students reported encouragement from high school professionals, only 61% of Lowest-SES students reported receiving this sort of encouragement. The SES-based encouragement gap is even more pronounced when encouragement originates from high school friends. Less than 50% of Lowest-SES students were encouraged by their high school friends to earn a college degree, whereas over three-fourths of Highest-SES students were encouraged by their friends to become a college graduate. Given the connection between encouragement and success in college, this SES-encouragement association is troublesome. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 20.) http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Interestingly, as for parental supports, the correlational evidence was less strong. Indeed, according to Reclaiming the American Dream, “By contrast, only one of four parental supports was statistically significant: the parent and student visiting at least one college together. [emphasis added] Unlike other forms of parental support, such as checking homework, encouraging students to take the SAT or ACT, and discussing college applications, campus visits appear to make college and its accessibility much more tangible.” (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, Reclaiming the American Dream, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 11.) http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf
Nonetheless, regarding the perceived importance of assistance from parents and high school guidance counselors, a 2010 report by The College Board--based on telephone surveys with 600 students who applied to college and 300 parents whose child(ren) had applied--reported the following: "Students relied most heavily on their parents and high school counselors for help with the college application process.” But, it noted: “However, students of first-generation status and lower-income students were less likely to receive help from their parents compared to students who had at least one parent who attended college." (Complexity in College Admission: Fact or Urban Myth: Research Findings of Parent and Student Perceptions of Complexity in College Admission Commissioned by the Task Force on Admissions in the 21st Century, CollegeBoard Advocacy & Policy Center, October 2010, pp. 4-6.)


One demographic fact not supportive of a student’s matriculation and graduation involved their own parental responsibility. Simply put, if they were a parent, their chances of access and success were reduced. As Clifford Adelman had stated in his report:

Socioeconomic status had a modest and diminishing association with bachelor’s degree attainment. Minority status had a modest negative association until performance (first-year performance and continuing performance) was taken into account, at which point it had no effect. Gender had no effect at any stage of the model. The only demographic variable to have a strong (and in this case, negative) association with degree completion was becoming a parent by age 20. (Clifford Adelman, The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006. p. 6.)


The researchers at Penn State University quantified the correlation of being a parent on a student’s likelihood of transferring from a 2-year program to a 4-year school as follows: “For all students, having children before completing a college degree reduces their chances to transfer to a 4-year institution by 19%. Among Lowest-SES students, this effect is about 14%.” (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 16.)

http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Cabrera and the PSU researchers also quantified a student’s SES with becoming a parent while seeking a college degree. As they stated:

Having children while attending college has been identified out as another risk factor for persisting in college to degree completion. Nora, Cabrera, Hagedorn, and Pascarella (1996) reported family responsibilities had the effect of competing with the academic and social components of the institution, thereby lessening a student’s engagement in the college
experience, intellectual development, and subsequent persistence. Adelman (1999) adds that having children while attending college lessens one’s chances of completing a college degree within ten years upon high school graduation. While the above findings are true for all students, the extent to which this at risk behavior is present among Lowest-SES students has not been examined. For our student population, we find Lowest-SES are indeed more prone to having children while attending college. Twenty four percent of Lowest-SES students reported having at least one child by age 23. This number is 18%, 11%, and 5% greater than the ones reported by Highest-SES, Middle-High SES, and Middle-Low SES students, respectively. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 26.)

http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Finally, the Penn State research team examined the correlation of becoming a parent and degree completion. They quantified that correlation with graduation for students of various SES designations, as follows: “Incurring parental responsibilities while pursuing a college degree hampers ones chances of degree completion by 23%. This negative effect is felt most by Highest-SES students for whom having children by age 23 decreases their degree completion chances by 48%.” (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, *Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 31.)

http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf

Interestingly, there is now another correlate cited that can impinge upon students’ college success: working too much in high school. According to an analysis by Sophie Terbush of the research (done at the University of Michigan, using national data from the Monitoring the Future Project, which surveyed over 68,000 students beginning with seniors in the high school class of 1976), “Students who work more than 15 hours a week in high school show lower rates of college completion, suggests a new study assessing the harm of high school work intensity.” Terbush summarized the report’s findings regarding students’ working in high school, as follows:

Researchers found that by age 29 or 30, more than half of high school students who had worked less than 15 hours a week had completed a bachelor’s degree. But for every five additional hours worked over 15 hours a week, students experienced an 8% drop in college completion. Only about 20% of those who had worked 31 hours or more a week in high school finished college. (Sophie Terbush, “High-schoolers who work less likely to finish college,” *USA TODAY*, April 27, 2011.)

15.5. An important obstacle, of course, in accessing college and achieving success is the cost of a higher education. As Susan Choy stated, “The price of attending college is still a significant obstacle for students from low- and middle-income families, but financial aid is an equalizer, to some degree. Low-income students enroll at the same rate as middle-income students if they take all the necessary steps toward enrollment.”—Susan P. Choy, *Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students*, American Council on Education, 2002, p. 5. [http://inpathways.net/access.pdf](http://inpathways.net/access.pdf)

Others agree that financial aid—and a student’s conception of affordability—can help improve access and success. The authors of *Reclaiming the American Dream* indicated as much in their report; they noted:

> Both applying for financial aid and applying for college loans improve the likelihood a student will obtain a bachelor’s degree. So does a student’s or parent’s attendance at an information session on financial aid benefits. Likewise, students who believe affordability does not affect their choice of college have an improved chance of attaining bachelor’s degrees. (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 12.) [http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf](http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf)

Unfortunately, many at-risk students don’t access financial aid. Indeed, according to the 2006 report for The Bridgespan Group, “Half to three-quarters of low-income students don’t apply for aid; they don’t apply for loans; and/or they don’t attend information sessions on postsecondary aid and its availability.” (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 15.) [http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf](http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf)

Often, underrepresented students and their parents may figure college is out of reach for them because they can’t afford it. Sadly, though understandably, this belief can reduce their access and success in college. According to the writers of *Reclaiming the American Dream*,

> Factors that affect the perception of affordability also have an effect on rates of matriculation and completion. Low-income students who attended financial aid information sessions and subsequently applied for financial aid were much more likely to attend and complete college, presumably because they understood both the true cost of college and the types of aid available to them. The simple fact is that in order to make college affordable, low-income students need more financial aid. (William Bedsworth, Susan Colby, and Joe Doctor, *Reclaiming the American Dream*, The Bridgespan Group, October 2006, p. 22.) [http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf](http://www.nhscholars.org/Documents/ReclaimingAmericanDream.pdf)
Alberto Cabrera and the researchers at Penn State summarized the varying correlation financial aid—and the types of aid—seemed to have with success in college. They concluded the following:

Research into the effect financial aid plays on degree completion is contradictory. Nora (1990), Voorhees (1987), and St. John (1990) found all forms of federal support equally effective in preventing students from dropping out. However, Stampen and Cabrera (1986, 1988) found persistence rates were highest when student aid packages included work-study programs. More recently, Adelman (1999) reported grant-in-aid and loans had a small but positive contribution to the probability of securing a college degree. On the other hand, Astin (1975) found and work-study programs had positive effects on persistence, while loans had negative effects when directed to low-income students. St. John’s (1991) comprehensive review of 25 years of research on the effect of financial aid led him to conclude reception of financial aid has a positive effect on persistence to graduation regardless of the type of financial aid. He also noted inconstancies could be attributed to methodological problems in terms of analytical models followed, the use of institutional databases versus national databases and levels of controls. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 25.) [http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf](http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf)

The PSU research team also quantified the correlation of various types (e.g., grants, loans) of financial aid and SES with degree completion; they found this:

For all students, receiving grants-in-aid and loans increases chances of completing a 4-year degree. Recipients of grants-in-aid are 7% more likely to earn a degree, while loan recipients are 12%. SES also moderates the impact of financial aid, particularly for loan recipients. Lowest-SES and Middle Low-SES students receiving loans increase their degree completion chances by 16% and 26%, respectively. (Alberto F. Cabrera, Kurt R. Burkum and Steven M. La Nasa, Pathways to a Four-Year Degree: Determinants of Degree Completion Among Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 35.) [http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf](http://www.sheeo.org/access/On%20the%20Right%20Path.pdf)

16. Access Programs

16.1 Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/94), a survey that tracked students every two years from 8th grade in 1988 through graduation in 1992 until 1994, Laura J. Horn and C. Dennis Carroll adopted the metaphor of a “pipeline,” utilized in a 1995 study by the National Science Foundation, to discuss a student’s path from high school to a 4-year college. According to their conception, “The pipeline has five major

Susan Choy followed this approach, stating in her 2002 study:

To make it to a four-year college, students must complete five steps, usually in this order:
- Aspire to college.
- Be academically prepared.
- Take the necessary entrance exams (such as the SAT or ACT).
- Apply to college.
- Enroll.

Students leave the path at each step along the way, but the greatest numbers are lost because they do not aspire to attend a four-year college or because they fail to prepare academically. (Susan P. Choy, *Access & Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students*, American Council on Education, 2002, pp. 11-12.) [http://inpathways.net/access.pdf](http://inpathways.net/access.pdf)

To assist at-risk students, access programs have been established throughout the United States. By definition, according to a book on postsecondary outreach, “College preparation programs are aimed at enhancing and supplementing a school’s regular activities to assist primarily low-income, minority youth who might otherwise not be able to attend college.” (William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, editors, *Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 3.) [http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=a9PFfxOPXgcC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Corwin,+Colyar,+%26+Tierney,+2005&ots=9Eqbm32W11&sig=fWcIE3txtb3xuE1kjaE5dbmcczs#v=onepage&q&f=false]

The usefulness of access outreach programs for student matriculation is often simply assumed, but Laura J. Horn, Xianglei Chen, and Cliford Adelman quantified this correlation, saying

College preparation activities also remained important in predicting 4-year college enrollment in the full model, especially if students participated in high school outreach programs. After all engagement variables were controlled for, students who reported participating in an outreach program had nearly twice the odds of enrolling in a 4-year college as those who did not. (Laura J. Horn, Xianglei Chen, and Cliford Adelman, *Toward Resiliency: At-Risk Students Who Make It to College*, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1998, p. 19.) [http://www.mprinc.com/products/pdf/toward_resiliency.pdf](http://www.mprinc.com/products/pdf/toward_resiliency.pdf)
However, there seems to be little consensus on what constitutes the essential elements of such programs. In a 2005 book of readings analyzing different components of access programs, the editors stated the following: “All activities are not equal and some activities will be more effective than others. Unfortunately, there is very little evaluative data on what works in college preparation programs.” (William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, editors, Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 2.)


Perna and Michelle Asha Cooper commented on such strategies, indicating this:

A review of the related literature suggests that “successful” early intervention programs may be characterized by five strategies: 1) begin early in the educational pipeline; 2) include a comprehensive set of services that vary based on a student’s position in the pipeline (Cunningham et al. 2003); 3) adapt services to recognize participants’ cultural strengths; 4) target services toward populations that most need the services; and 5) involve partnerships and/or collaborations among various government, educational, and private entities. (Laura W. Perna and Michelle Asha Cooper, “Intervening Early and Successfully in the Education Pipeline,” in Reflections on College Access & Persistence: In Honor of the 40th Anniversary of the Higher Education Act, Advisory Committee on Students Financial Assistance, September 2006, p. 49.)

Interestingly, reviews of literature on college preparation programs have not found conclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of certain elements or correlates. For example, regarding the impact of peer groups, William G. Tierney and Julia E. Colyar stated that “Research on the influence of peer groups does not provide a clear-cut answer about their influence on the college-going patterns of low-income urban minority youth.” (William G. Tierney and Julia E. Colyar, “The Role of Peer Groups in College Preparation Programs,” in William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 67.) Similarly, Octavio Villalpando and Daniel G. Solorzano concluded the following in their search
regarding culture in college access: “Unfortunately, the single most important finding in our review was that not much empirical research has been published on the role of culture in college preparation programs.” (Octavio Villalpando and Daniel G. Solorzano, “The Role of Culture in College Preparation Programs: A Review of the Research Literature,” in William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 27.)

Nonetheless, Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller of Wilder Research examined several programs that sought to assist at-risk students in accessing college; their 2006 review of literature suggested “key features of effective programs.” As they indicated, “. . . the key features discussed here were frequently found in other literature reviews, program evaluations, and studies designed to measure the impacts of contributing factors. Programs with the best evidence for effectiveness, based on this review, contain many of the features highlighted in this section.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 9.)

It should come as little surprise that the first program feature scrutinized by Schultz and Mueller was that they “Prepare students academically.” [emphasis in original] As the authors noted: “Multiple research studies have concluded that access to a college preparatory curriculum while in high school is the most critical variable for helping students gain access to postsecondary education (Corwin, Colyar, & Tierney, 2005; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Perna, 2000).” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 9.)


In her review of college access programs, Laura W. Perna spoke unequivocally on the importance of academic preparation, emphasizing that such preparation must be the priority of these initiatives. As she stated, “. . . college preparation programs will most effectively reach their primary goal of raising college enrollment rates by ensuring that low-income, African American, and Hispanic high school students are academically prepared to enroll and succeed in college.” (Laura W. Perna, “The Key to College Access: Rigorous Academic
As for the various activities offered by college access initiatives, Perna did not mince her recommendation, declaring that “Although such services as tutoring, admissions test preparation, academic assistance, academic counseling, and instruction in note taking and study skills may be beneficial components of student-centered academic development programs, these activities should be used only to support successful completion of high-quality, rigorous academic coursework.” (Laura W. Perna, “The Key to College Access: Rigorous Academic Preparation,” in William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, editors, Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 130.) As she concluded, “Only by focusing on ensuring high levels of academic preparation will college preparation programs effectively reduce the continued income and racial/ethnic group gaps in college enrollment and degree compliance.” (Laura W. Perna, “The Key to College Access: Rigorous Academic Preparation,” in William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, editors, Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 134.)

Jennifer Schultz and Dan Mueller also indicated the importance of academic preparation—particularly, in math; they stated:

It is especially important that students take rigorous mathematics courses during high school, as this was found to be the single greatest predictor of successful college completion (Adelman, 1999). Programs should address teachers’ biases and instill high expectations among school staff as well as among students (Martinez & Klopott, 2002). Additional strategies include providing academic counseling, enrichment, and remediation; teaching study skills; and creating personalized learning environments. (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 9.)

16.2. The second trait Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller examined in their literature review of access programs was to “Balance academic support with social support.” [emphasis in original] As the two writers indicated, “Research has shown that social support is a predictor of college attendance and completion (Perna, 2000). Social support helps students see college as a realistic option.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 9.)
Schultz and Mueller also commented on the importance of peer support, stating “Students are more likely to plan to attend college if their friends also plan to enroll” (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Strong social networks help support students’ academic and emotional development, which can influence their likelihood of enrolling in college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001).” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 9.) http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decf-72ee-4b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

Next, they recognized the role of mentors in college access programs serving underrepresented advisees. They noted: “In addition to peer support, research has shown that mentors play a key supportive role in helping low-income students overcome obstacles and enroll in college (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996).” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 9.) http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decf-72ee-4b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

A third characteristic of college preparation programs reviewed by Schultz and Miller was that such initiatives “Intervene early.” [emphasis in original] As the authors indicated, “Research has shown that it is critical to intervene early in order to facilitate curricular planning. Researchers recommend that programs begin by eighth grade (Perna, 2002), no later than the ninth grade (Corwin et al., 2005), or well before high school (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996) if possible.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 10.) http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decf-72ee-4b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

In regard to this characteristic of early intervention, Schultz and Miller found that “Almost all of the programs reviewed begin serving students in ninth grade or earlier, and 40 percent of the programs target students prior to entering high school.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 10.) http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decf-72ee-4b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

16.3. Accessing college and succeeding there can be a family affair. Indeed, there seems to be an association between family involvement and students’ matriculation—as well as graduation. Hence, it is understandable that the fourth criterion of college access programs reviewed by Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller is “Involve and encourage parents/family.”
As those authors indicate, “Students with parents who are knowledgeable about college are more likely to attend college. Effective outreach programs address this predictor by involving parents and other family members, providing college information to parents, and teaching parents how to support their children’s education (Perna, 2002; Corwin et al., 2005; Swail & Perna, 2002).” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 10.)

http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decd-72ee-44b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

In their study of culture and outreach initiatives, Octavio Villalpando and Danniel G. Solorzano commented on involving parents; they noted that “For students of color, parent involvement in a college preparation program represents an important way of maintaining a connection with their culture.” Furthermore, they stated: As Gandara (1995) noted in her longitudinal study of educational mobility among Chicanos, the families and parents of students of color symbolize a powerful cultural representation that often enables students to shape their attitudes and aspirations around a sense of responsibility and commitment to their community.” (Octavio Villalpando and Daniel G. Solorzano, “The Role of Culture in College Preparation Programs: A Review of the Research Literature,” in William G. Tierney, Zoe B. Corwin, and Julia E. Colyar, editors, Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 20.)

http://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/61028.pdf

Laura J. Horn, Xianglei Chen, and Clifford Adelman used logistic regressions to quantify the importance of parental involvement, stating this:

Students whose parents frequently discussed school-related matters with them had more than double the odds of enrolling in a 4-year college (odds ratio=2.17) than students whose parents had little to no discussion with them. Parent discussions—even some discussion—also had a strong effect on increasing the odds of a student attending any postsecondary education (odds ratios 1.57 and 2.45, respectively, for some and much discussion). (Laura J. Horn, Xianglei Chen, and Clifford Adelman, Toward Resiliency: At-Risk Students Who Make It to College, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1998, p. 16.)


But involving parents can be challenging—particularly, when a child comes from a low-income family or otherwise underrepresented group. Laura W. Perna and Michelle Asha Cooper commented on this in their study; they noted: “Nonetheless, although virtually all parents want to promote their children’s educational attainment, low-income parents often are unable to become involved in their children’s education because of economic, social, and psychological barriers (Perna 2005a).” (Laura W. Perna and Michelle Asha Cooper, “Intervening Early and Successfully in the Education Pipeline,” in Reflections on College Access
Indeed, Perna and Cooper concluded that “Despite the high apparent prevalence of parental involvement components in early intervention programs, Tierney (2002; Tierney and Auerbach 2005) suggests that parents are only superficially involved, likely because programs often lack the time, funding, staffing, and other resources that are required for more substantial involvement.” In fact, they state that “… little is known about the most effective ways to promote parental involvement in early intervention programs (Perna and Titus 2005).” (Laura W. Perna and Michelle Asha Cooper, “Intervening Early and Successfully in the Education Pipeline,” in Reflections on College Access & Persistence: In Honor of the 40th Anniversary of the Higher Education Act, Advisory Committee on Students Financial Assistance, September 2006, p. 48.)

Nonetheless, it seems that if parents are generally supportive of a student’s learning, however, family involvement can occur through other family members—like older brothers or sisters. As Pedro Noguera, a sociologist at New York University, said,

My learning story is this: my parents were by far my most important teachers. They taught me the value of hard work, of honesty and of discipline. They taught me that it is more important to be responsible than to seek honor or recognition. They never understood the workings of college, so they never pressured us about where to apply or what to study. In fact, they could help us very little as we navigated school and undertook the complex process of applying to college (the older siblings did that for the younger ones). (Pedro Noguera, “My Parents, My Teachers,” in Valerie Strauss, “A story on the power of parents as teachers,” The Washington Post—The Answer Sheet, April 19, 2001.) http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/a-story-on-the-power-of-parents-as-teachers/2011/04/19/AFnWzk2D_blog.html

The fifth characteristic of college access programs that Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller reviewed was to “Help students navigate the college admissions process.” [emphasis in original] As the authors succinctly put it, “Research has shown that helping students complete college applications and helping students prepare for entrance exams are important predictors of enrollment (Horn & Chen, 1998).” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 10.) http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decf-72ee-44b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

From the student’s perspective, Horn, Chen, and Adelman indicated the following: “Similarly, getting help with college applications and preparing for entrance exams also remained important predictors of enrollment.” (Laura J. Horn, Xianglei Chen, and Clifford Adelman, Toward Resiliency: At-Risk Students Who Make It to
In their review of literature, Perna and Cooper indicated this regarding the importance of high school personnel providing college information for underrepresented students:

Research suggests that African American students and students with lower incomes are more dependent than other students on high school personnel for college-related knowledge and information (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, and Sameroff 1999; Lareau 1987). The 2004 National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) Counseling Trends Survey reveals that school counselors are often the primary providers of information about financial aid (Hawkins and Lautz 2005). (Laura W. Perna and Michelle Asha Cooper, “Intervening Early and Successfully in the Education Pipeline,” in Reflections on College Access & Persistence: In Honor of the 40th Anniversary of the Higher Education Act, Advisory Committee on Students Financial Assistance, September 2006, p. 46.)

I know from our 10 years of work with high school advisees in the Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP) how students can benefit from this assistance. Indeed, helping students file applications by deadlines facilitates their accessing of higher education. As Horn and Carroll had stated in their 1997 “Pipeline” study, “Students who enrolled in a four-year college were also more likely to report receiving help from their school in filling out their application than were students who enrolled in other postsecondary education or who did not enroll.” (Laura J. Horn and C. Dennis Carroll, Confronting the Odds: Students At Risk and the Pipeline to Higher Education, Statistical Analysis Report, National Center For Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES 98-094, October 1997, p. 46.)

Finally, preparing students for the ACT (by taking its practice tests in the allotted time) exposes them to working faster—to say nothing of acquiring “test-wiseness” as they learn the ACT's format. Indeed, it was my experience working with small groups of high school students at Youngstown (OH) Early College (YEC) that those advisees who took all practice tests for the ACT while being timed achieved actual ACT composite scores akin to what they’d received during their practice testing.

16.4 The sixth characteristic of college access programs reviewed by Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller was to “Provide comprehensive, long-term support.” [emphasis in original] According to their review of literature, they concluded the following regarding initiatives’ impact: “The programs that have the greatest impact tend to be those that are comprehensive in terms of the services provided and intense with regard to the level of involvement
required (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Perna & Swail, 2002). In addition, several evaluations have shown that students benefit more the longer they participate in the program (Gándara & Bial, 2001).” Schultz and Mueller also noted that “Nearly all of the programs in this review offer a wide variety of services and support students for at least four years.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, *Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review*, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 10.)

http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decd-72ee-44b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

The seventh trait of college preparation programs examined by Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller was, perhaps, the most controversial: “Encourage systemic reform.” [emphasis in original] In the estimation of the authors, “Most outreach programs are peripheral and supplemental to the classroom, which may explain why outreach programs tend to have little effect on students’ academic achievement (Gándara & Bial, 2001).” They quote the view of Watson Scott Swail (2001) of the Educational Policy Institute that, at bottom, such programs require “a desire to help change the very system whose failure required their existence’ if they are to have any long-term or systemic impacts on our educational system (p. xiii).” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, *Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review*, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 11.)

http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decd-72ee-44b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

Reviewers Schultz and Mueller also opined on the place of access programs in schools, citing “. . . researchers at the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO, 2003) [who] found that the most effective programs offer long-term systemic services that are incorporated as part of the regular school offerings, rather than shortterm supplemental programmatic services.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, *Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review*, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 11.)

http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decd-72ee-44b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

In addition, the reviewers commented on the relationship between levels of education, noting that “Research has also shown that linking the secondary and postsecondary educational systems – for example, by aligning high school curricular requirements with college entry requirements – helps low-income and minority students succeed (Martinez & Klopott, 2005).” Unfortunately, Schultz and Mueller indicated that “. . . very few programs take a systemic approach, and this is the case among the programs included in this review.” The reviewers did grant, however, that “Several programs address this issue to some extent, for example, by establishing partnerships between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions and by helping ensure that students complete college entrance requirements.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, *Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of*
16.5 The final descriptor of college preparation programs reviewed by Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller was that they “Provide financial assistance.” [emphasis in original] As the authors stated, logically, “Students need adequate financial resources in order to attend and complete college. Research has shown that financial aid – especially state funded need-based grants – is positively associated with college enrollment (St. John, Chung, Musoba, Simmons, Wooden, & Mendez, 2004), and students who received financial aid persist in college better than or as well as students who do not receive aid (Hu & St. John, 2001).” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 11.) http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decd-72ee-44b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

Schultz and Mueller specify some of the forms this “financial assistance” can take, stating “Programs can provide financial assistance by sending students on college visits, covering the fees for college entrance exams and applications, and awarding scholarships (Gándara & Bial, 2001).” The authors further noted that, “Although only about half of the programs included in this review provide scholarships, most programs provide students with information and assist students in applying for financial aid.” (Jennifer Lee Schultz and Dan Mueller, Effectiveness of programs to improve postsecondary education enrollment and success of underrepresented youth: A literature review, NorthStar Education Finance, November 2006. p. 11.) http://www.mncollegeaccess.org/sites/b862decd-72ee-44b5-80f8-4f0ac42e8716/uploads/NorthstarLitReviewWithoutRICFSum_11-06.pdf

In its 10 years of existence, our Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP) has provided over 175 last-dollar scholarships—most for $1,000—to help students reduce their “unmet need,” defined as the amount they still have to pay after their expected family contribution (EFC) and all financial aid have been subtracted from their total cost of attendance. In recent years, many—if not most--of our awardees have had EFCs of $0 and unmet need of at least $1,000—and, sometimes, several thousand dollars.

The preceding paragraph illustrates a major difficulty for first-generation college applicants and their parents: understanding how financial aid is determined and awarded by colleges and universities. Indeed, it’s probably safe to say that few understand the process. For that reason, I’ve developed the following simplified discussion, emphasizing key terms, which was posted in 2009 on our MVCAP blog. (Links to those blog posts are provided.)
Let's start with an airplane analogy. Imagine you are flying from, say, Pittsburgh to San Diego. If your flight has 100 passengers, not everyone pays the same fare. Those who purchased tickets 30 days early likely got a discount; those who bought their tickets online probably saved money; and those who waited until the day of the flight to purchase paid the highest price for their seat on the plane. Plus, those who had enough frequent-flyer miles flew for free!

It’s a similar situation for college costs. The price each student (or his/her family) pays per year is often different. Generally, however, three factors largely determine how much you’ll pay to attend (i.e., to ride on the college airplane!)

These three factors are the "a-b-c" of college financial aid:

a. Financial Need;
b. Grade-Point Average (GPA); and
c. ACT or SAT score(s).

As you’ll soon see, understanding college financial aid is as easy as a-b-c! http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/1-confused-about-college-financial-aid.html

To start, we’ll look at the most important factor related to college financial aid: financial need. Suffice it to say that your conception of your own financial need may have little to do with what a college or university regards as your financial need. And therein lies the confusion, misunderstanding, and frustration experienced by many students and parents: you wonder how the college came up with that!

To understand how colleges will view your financial need, we’ll address the following six topics:
1. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
2. SAR (Student Aid Report)
3. EFC (Expected Family Contribution)
4. Financial-Aid Package (put together by the college)
5. Gift- or Merit-Aid (Discounts, Grants, and Scholarships)


Perhaps the most important single determiner of your Financial Need for college financial aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is most-frequently referred to as the FAFSA. The good news about the FAFSA is that it’s free; it is also available at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/, and you file online. That's about all the good news regarding the FAFSA!

The other news is the FAFSA consists of a form provided by the U.S. federal government’s Department of Education to help colleges determine how much a student (and his/her family) can afford to pay per year. A federal
formula is used to crunch the numbers you enter. Figures are based on your federal income-tax return for the preceding year.

Section 483 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires the U.S. Secretary of Education to "produce, distribute and process free of charge a common financial form to be used to determine the need and eligibility of a student." The FAFSA is that form.

To fill out the FAFSA, the student and parent will need all of the following:

a. Student Social Security card (Contact http://www.sss.gov/ to get one.);
b. Mother's Social Security card (Contact http://www.sss.gov/ to get one.);
c. Father's Social Security card (Contact http://www.sss.gov/ to get one.);
d. Student Driver's License Number;
e. Student and parents' 2009 Federal Income Tax Return (IRS Form 1040, 1040 EZ, or 1040 A); and
f. Student and parents' records of untaxed income received in 2009, such as social security benefits, welfare, AFDC benefits, worker's compensation benefits, etc.

The FAFSA contains questions divided into four sections:

SECTION 1--STUDENT INFORMATION: Areas include Student Citizenship Status, Marital Status, Selective Service Registration, Student Aid Eligibility Drug Convictions, Highest school your father completed, and Highest school your mother completed. When a student is online, they can add up to 10 colleges on their FAFSA; these colleges will receive the information from their processed FAFSA. A student is generally able to fill out these items.

SECTION 2--STUDENT DEPENDENCY STATUS: 13 questions are asked; if a student checks (i.e., answers "yes" to) any box (question), he/she will not have to provide parental information: they will be considered "independent" by the FAFSA. If a student checks none of the boxes, they will need to provide parental information in the next section--because they are considered "dependent" by the FAFSA. Note: most students are regarded as "dependent."

SECTION 3--PARENT INFORMATION: (Relates to the parents' income and assets.) Areas include parents' 2010 income tax return, adjusted gross income, other income, additional financial information, and untaxed income.

SECTION 4--STUDENT INFORMATION: (Relates to the student's income and assets.) Areas include student's 2010 income tax return, adjusted gross income, other income, additional financial information, and untaxed income.
Among the most important questions dealing with a student's (and, if married, their spouse's) ability to pay for college are the following:
· In addition to grants, are you interested in student loans (which you must pay back)? Answer "Yes," since you can always decline them later.
· In addition to grants, are you interested in "work-study" (which you earn through work)? Again, answer "Yes," since you can always decline to work later.
· What was your (and spouse's) adjusted gross income for 2010?
· Enter the total amount of your (and spouse's) income tax for 2010.
· How much did you (and spouse) earn from working (wages, salaries, tips, etc.) in 2010?

Among the most important questions asked regarding the student's parents' financial ability to pay are the following:
· What was your parents' adjusted gross income for 2010?
· Enter the total amount of your parents' income tax for 2010.
· How much did your parents earn from working (wages, salaries, tips, etc.) in 2010?

The form requires a student to certify that they understand that "the Secretary of Education has the authority to verify information reported on this application with the Internal Revenue Service and other federal agencies." It also states the penalty for not telling the truth: "If you purposely give false or misleading information, you may be fined $20,000, sent to prison, or both." And you just wanted college financial aid!

The FAFSA is made available after January 1 each year; you should try to submit it by February 1 for priority consideration for financial aid. But to do that, you need to have your income-tax return completed for the previous 12-month period. Thus, you are very busy with the FAFSA during the month of January!

As if filling out and filing the FAFSA isn't taxing enough, some colleges and universities also require students to complete a PROFILE, the financial aid application of the College Board, for non-federal aid. Like the FAFSA, you can complete the PROFILE online (http://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp). http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/3-fafsa.html

Once you've filled out and filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you will receive from the U.S. federal government's Department of Education the 2011-2012 Student Aid Report (SAR) Federal Student Aid Programs. The good news about getting the SAR, as it's called, is there's nothing to fill out and it's not too long a document to read. It displays the
printed responses you entered for each of the 100+ blanks on the FAFSA. It also tells you if you qualify for a Federal Pell Grant. Finally, it lists what are called Processing Results.

When you file the FAFSA online (at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/), you can print your own SAR immediately after submitting your information. If you forget to then, you can access and print your SAR later—as long as you remember your personal information number (PIN) and Social Security Number. (To get a PIN, hit http://www.pin.ed.gov/; to get a Social Security Number, click on http://www.sss.gov/). Here’s the step-by-step way to go online to print your SAR:

1. Click on http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/
2. On the screen headed "FAFSA on the Web YOUR FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID," look at the third column of choices, entitled FAFSA Follow-Up. Select the arrow choice Print Student Aid Report.
3. On the screen headed "FAFSA on the Web Print Student Aid Report (SAR)," click on the school year you want the SAR for—probably the 2011-2012 School Year. Click Next.
4. On the screen headed "FAFSA on the Web Print Student Aid Report (SAR)," click Next.
5. On the screen headed "FAFSA on the Web Print Student Aid Report (SAR) Supported Browsers," click Next.
6. On the screen headed "PIN REQUEST & INFORMATION Confirming Your Identity," enter the answer to each of these four questions about your student:

   What is your social security number?
   What are the first two (2) letters of your last name?
   What is your date of birth?
   What is your PIN?

Be sure to use the format given in the examples. Now click SUBMIT REQUEST.

7. On the screen headed "STUDENT ACCESS on the Web SAR Transactions," you’ll find your Expected Family Contribution (EFC): Bingo!

If you complete and file your FAFSA, you'll usually receive your SAR in less than one month. It will have information on both the front and back sides. On the front side, your EFC will be printed about 4 inches to the right of where the student’s name is printed. The last paragraph on the front side will say whether the student is eligible for a Federal Pell Grant. On the back side, your FAFSA responses will be printed on the top 2/3 of the page. On the bottom 1/3, under Processing Results, your EFC will be printed at the top of the middle column.
The bad news about the SAR provided by the U.S. Department of Education to help colleges determine how much a student (and his/her family) can afford to pay per year is that many students and parents can't make any sense of it! Most important, they don't know where to look for the most important item it gives: the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). That's too bad, because the EFC is used to determine the financial need and eligibility of a student for financial aid. We'll talk about the EFC next.

Suffice it to say now, the SAR is an important document sent directly to the colleges you specified on your FAFSA. They'll use it to determine your financial need and whether you'll qualify for financial aid. http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/4-sar.html

Now we get to the heart of financial need. Once you've filled out and filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and received back from the U.S. Department of Education the Student Aid Report (SAR), you'll know what the federal government's formula computes your family can contribute for one year to send a student to college. That dollar amount is called your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). We've already discussed where to find your EFC on the SAR; if you forget, you can access the previous paragraphs on the SAR. In a nutshell, however, the EFC on an online SAR will be on the screen headed "STUDENT ACCESS on the Web SAR Transactions," which you can access via http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/. On the printed copy of the SAR, which you received after filing the FAFSA online, your EFC will be printed on the front side about 4 inches to the right of where the student's name is printed. On the back side, it will be on the bottom 1/3, under Processing Results, at the top of the middle column.

As I've indicated, the EFC is used to determine the financial need and eligibility of a student for financial aid. Here is an explanation of the EFC, according to the U.S. Department of Education's pamphlet, The Student Guide: Financial Aid: "The formula used to calculate your EFC is established by law and is used to measure your family's financial strength on the basis of your family's income and assets." Know that it has nothing to do with what you think your family can afford per year--only what the "federal methodology," as it's called, calculates your ability to pay.

As the federal government's pamphlet also states, "If your EFC is below a certain amount, you'll be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant . . ." Furthermore, as the pamphlet explains, ". . . Your EFC is used in the following equation to determine your financial need:
Cost of Attendance
- Expected Family Contribution (EFC)
= Financial Need."
Put most succinctly, the pamphlet summarizes: "Your financial aid administrator calculates your cost of attendance and subtracts the EFC. If there's anything left over, you're considered to have financial need."

Thus, the EFC is probably the single most important number colleges use to determine your financial need and whether you'll qualify for financial aid. Your EFC will be used by a college to come up with your student's Financial Aid Package, which we'll discuss next.


This is what you've been waiting for. The financial-aid package is what the college offers to help a student finance his or her college expenses. As we've said before, the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), listed on the U.S. Department of Education Student Aid Report (SAR) you receive after filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), goes a long way toward determining how large your "package" is and what it will contain. At the very least, the EFC makes you eligible for a Federal Pell Grant in your financial-aid package; at the most, the EFC will help establish what your out-of-pocket expenses will be for the year and whether you'll have to borrow money--and the size of such loans to the student or parent.

At many universities, other factors also influence the size and composition of the financial-aid package; among these are a student's grade-point average (GPA), scores on the ACT or SAT, and "special characteristics. Here's a brief comment on each factor--since a more complete discussion will follow:

a. GPA--Generally speaking, the higher the GPA (relative to other students who apply and are admitted to a particular college or university), the better--that is bigger and more free--the financial-aid package will be.

b. ACT or SAT scores--Some colleges will award scholarships (i.e., discount their costs) based, at least in part, on these scores. Typically, ACT scores of at least 30-32 (of 36) and SAT scores of at least 1300-1400 (of 1600) will pay off as students will be awarded more money in grants as opposed to loans.

c. "Special Characteristics"--Included here would be athletic prowess, the ethnicity of an applicant, and particular academic/musical/artistic abilities. Indeed, some colleges and universities use different criteria for admission and financial aid if a student is a recruited athlete or is from an underrepresented group.

Some colleges use a graph with GPA and ACT/SAT scores on the vertical and horizontal axis, respectively. The point at which a student’s GPA and test scores intersect determines the amount of their discount or scholarship.
Under-represented groups at a particular school may be sought to enhance diversity, so financial-aid packages can be made very attractive. Regarding students having particular abilities, the rarer ones (for example, a virtuoso violinist—who can play in the university’s orchestra, which just graduated its first-chair violinist—or someone who has had a book published at age 18) can pay off handsomely in admittance and financial aid.


**Gift-aid** is the best kind of financial aid—because a student doesn’t have to pay it back! This aid is a gift that reduces the cost of attending a particular college or university. Unfortunately, there never seems to be enough of gift-aid. Nonetheless, there are three types of gift-aid we'll discuss: a) discounts; b) grants; and c) scholarships.

a) **Discounts**—Until relatively recently, discounts weren't discussed much publicly by colleges. However, discounts were discussed in articles and presentations intended for college admissions and financial-aid personnel. Simply put, a discount is a reduction in the costs—usually, tuition and fees—a student will be charged by a college or university. Consider an automobile analogy: the old adage was "Never pay the sticker price for a new car." Well, with many schools, particularly small, private colleges, the same holds true today. The college may reduce its costs to enroll your student—depending on how desirable a prospective student the school considers them.


Why is discounting done? So colleges can enroll the most able students it can. Of course, the most selective universities don’t have to discount their tuition and fees because they have more highly-qualified applicants than they can admit already—many of whom are willing to pay "full fare." But less-selective and less well-endowed schools, in competition with other colleges like themselves, use discounting to enroll the students they covet most.

Each college has its own "look-fors" when considering applicants, but most want those with high GPAs in a rigorous high school curriculum as well as high ACT or SAT scores. Some seek high school valedictorians or National Merit Scholars. And for these top students, colleges may be willing to discount their costs significantly.
Why don't schools just reduce tuition "up front," by simply cutting their "sticker price"? Because then applicants who lack high GPAs and test scores but who desire to enroll--and can pay "full fare"--may be admitted to enhance revenue. Sound like a business? Maybe that's why many colleges now call their "Office of Admissions" by the more modern--and, perhaps, more accurate--label of "Enrollment Management."

b) Grants--Grants are reductions in college costs based on the financial need of an applicant--as indicated by their Expected Family Contribution (EFC), derived from their parents' responses on the FAFSA. The best grants are the Federal Pell and state grants based on an applicant's EFC. The lower a student's EFC, the higher their grant can be. In 2009, the maximum Pell Grant awarded was $5,350 per year to a student whose EFC was less than $100. To use the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) as an example of a state grant, its maximum in 2009 was approximately $1,008 per year. When you add these two grants together (= $6,358), a student could finance much of his or her tuition and fees at some states' public institutions--if they commuted and did not have to pay the $7,000-$8,000 per year for room and board. The problem with the Pell Grant is it doesn't now cover room and board charges at most public universities and doesn't even come close to paying for tuition and fees--let alone room and board--at nearly all private schools.

c) Scholarships--Scholarships are cuts in college costs based on merit--usually determined by high GPA and ACT or SAT scores. But, you say, that sounds like a discount, which we've already discussed. Ah, you're getting the idea. Many of those "scholarships" students receive from colleges and universities are, in fact, discounts--that is, reductions in costs rather than money going from the school to the student. (Notice here that we're not talking about the scholarships awarded by local organizations or community groups, which are actual money going to the students--and then to the college.) Many colleges have established a whole hierarchy of scholarships: President's, Deans', and department awards are common examples. Some scholarships are actually funded by interest from contributions to the college's endowment (i.e., investment principal) made by the people whose name they commemorate. But many college and/or university scholarships--particularly those to, say, "cheerleaders," "class presidents," etc.--are simply cuts in college costs--not "money" the student will receive.

Well, that's "gift aid" in a nutshell. If it sounds "nutty," I can't help it: college financial aid today sometimes does seem crazy!


Self-help is the "other" kind of financial aid--because a student or parent has to pay it back! We may not like it but colleges expect both students and parents to "help themselves" pay for their higher education--hence, the
term "self-help." The most common variety consists of a loan—the four-letter word in college financial aid! Loans, of course, must be repaid (with interest), which results in students' loan-debt.

Another kind of self-help is federal work-study—a job (usually, on campus) offered a student in their financial-aid package for which they are paid (often, minimum wage); students can use this money they earn to pay for some of their college expenses.

The good news about self-help is it may enable a student to attend college now—even though they or their parents don’t have enough money today to pay for it. And make no mistake: the price of a college education may be high—and getting higher each year. Thus, self-help is the type of financial aid we love to hate—but, often, couldn’t afford to finance a university degree without. http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2009/11/8-self-help.html

Here is a review outline of financial aid. Merit aid is decided by each college or university, based on its own applicant pool. It is usually called a “scholarship”—though, often, it is a discount on the price to be paid. Some common criteria for merit aid include the following:

1. Grade-Point Average (GPA)—“The higher, the better!”
   The rigor of courses on a student’s high school transcript is determined by:
   a. The more Advanced Placement (AP) courses taken, the more rigorous the curriculum is regarded.
   b. The more higher-level courses in math and lab science taken, the more rigorous the curriculum is regarded.

2. Class Rank— “The higher, the better!”
   a. The larger a senior class, the more impressive a high class rank is.
   b. The higher-achieving a school is, the more impressive a high class rank is.

3. ACT Composite Score— “The higher, the better!”
   a. ACT scores range from 0 to 36; the national average is approximately 21.
   b. A student’s score is compared to the state and national averages.
   c. A score in the 30s put a student’s score in the highest 5% of test-takers.

4. Distinctions in the following areas:
   Academic;
   Arts; and
   Leadership in extracurriculars

5. Under-representation (i.e., a student is from a group whose percentage on campus is less than its percentage nationwide.)
6. Division I recruited athlete—particularly, in a major revenue-producing sport

Note: 1% of all U.S. athletes will receive a Division I “full ride” grant-in-aid.

**Need-based aid** is determined by responses on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which should be filed online by February 1 and must be filed again each year.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)—How much the Federal formula calculates a student and parent(s) can pay for college

Types of Financial Aid

1. Grants—do not have to be repaid (“gift aid”); Pell increased by The College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA), passed by Congress and signed by President Bush.

Federal Pell Grant—If EFC is $0, (maximum) Pell Grant amount is $5,350/yr.—but, if EFC is $4,000 or higher, Pell Grant amount is $0/yr.

Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG)—A student who completes a rigorous high school curriculum (defined as 4 yrs. English, 3 yrs. math, 3 yrs. science, 3 yrs. social studies, and 1 yr. of a foreign language) can receive an additional Pell grant amount.

Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG)—If EFC is $0 (with a family income level of $75,000/yr.), OCOG is $1,008/yr. at a public college or university $2,256/yr. at a private, non-profit college or university $0/yr. at a private, for profit (proprietary) institution

But, if EFC is $2,191, OCOG is $0.
Therefore, if EFC is 0, $5,350 Pell Grant + $1,008 OCOG = $6,358/yr.

2. Federal Work Study—In exchange for work in a campus job, a student gets paid, up to approximately $2,500/yr.

3. Federal Loans

Federal Stafford Loan—subsidized (current fixed interest rate is 5.6%, cut by CCRAA on 7/1/08 and, eventually, to 3.4% in July 2011) or unsubsidized (6.8%)

Federal Perkins Loan (current fixed interest rate is 5.0%)
Federal PLUS Loan (Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students)—Parents who qualify can borrow up to the total annual cost minus other aid received, with 10 yrs. to repay; current fixed interest rate is 7.9% (+ fee of up to 4% of loan)

Private Loans—at a higher (9.0+%), often variable, rate of interest

**How much will a particular college or university cost me?** Remember the airplane-flight analogy: on average, 60 different fares per flight!

Each college or university sets its “sticker price.”

Like buying a new car, you may or may not have to pay the “sticker price.”

Determining your Cost at a particular College or University

1. Total Cost of Attendance (C of A)—Which may include the following:
   - Tuition and fees—rising by 3-10%/yr.
   - Books/Supplies—average $100 per course/yr. (5 courses in Sem. I + 5 courses in Sem. II = 10 courses x $100 = $1,000/yr.)
   - Transportation—driving/flying to and from campus; gasoline; parking fees; fares
   - Room and Board—vary by college; estimate an additional $7,000/yr.
   - Student Health Insurance
   - Other Expenses—food & drink; entertainment (games, movies, concerts, cable TV, music downloads, etc.); laundry/dry cleaning; toiletries; internet access; credit-card interest; cell phone (estimate $50/mo. = $600/yr.); decorating dorm room (average $1,200/yr.)

2. Minus Expected Family Contribution (EFC)—Based on your FAFSA responses and the federal methodology
   - What was your adjusted gross income for 200_?
   - As of today, what is your total current balance of cash, savings, and checking accounts?
   - As of today, what is the net worth of your investments, including real estate (not your home)?
   - As of today, what is the net worth of your current businesses and/or investment farms? Do not include a farm that you live on and operate.

3. Equals Financial Need (= Aid Eligibility)

4. Minus Federal Pell Grant— to qualify, your EFC must be < $4,000 ($5,350/yr. max)
5. Minus Academic Competitiveness Grant—$750/$1,300/yr.

6. Minus Ohio College Opportunity Grant—up to $1,008/$2,256; to qualify, your EFC must be < $2,200

7. Minus Federal Work Study—generally, up to $2,500/yr. for working up to 20 hrs/wk

8. Minus Merit Aid—any institutional scholarships or discounts

9. Minus Federal Stafford Loan—subsidized/unsubsidized ($5,500/$6,500/$7,500/yr.)

10. Plus Expected Family Contribution (EFC)—Based on FAFSA responses and federal methodology

11. Equals “Out-of-Pocket” Amount—The check you must write—often indicating a “financial-need gap” (unmet need), which may have to be met by a Federal PLUS loan or private loans

12. Calculate “Loan-Debt”—For student and parent(s) Student (Stafford @ fixed 5.6%/yr.; max: $5,500+$6,500+$7,500+$7,500=$27,000; Perkins @ fixed 5%/yr.) Parent (PLUS @ fixed 7.9%/yr.; max: C of A – other aid) http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2009/11/16-how-much-will-college-cost-me.html

17.0. 16-Point Advising Plan

Over the 10 years of its existence, our Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP) has developed and implemented the following advising plan for high school students.


2) Begin a college search by determining which schools may best suit desired areas of study and academic programs as well as family finances, again via post 100 on the MVCAP blog website at http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/08/100-going-to-college-step-by-step.html
3) Get information about preparation, fee-waivers (if applicable), and registration, either online or mailing by deadlines, for the ACT and/or SAT.

4) Use an online estimator, like that on the website of the ACT (www.act.org/fane/) to determine financial need by calculating the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) for the first year of college.

5) Compare EFC to costs of any colleges of interest, via a website like the link on the ACT site or the net-price calculator to be on the school’s website by the end of October 2011.

6) Search local resources, college viewbooks, and Internet sites to identify scholarships, tuition-discounts, and gift-aid.

7) Consider the advantage of Early-Decision and Early-Action options vs. regular admissions.

8) Select 3-6 colleges to apply to, based on the following student data:
   a. strengths and interests;
   b. desired career fields and corresponding academic programs;
   c. high school curriculum completed;
   d. grade-point average;
   e. ACT/SAT scores; and
   f. opportunity for financial aid, related to need (EFC) and merit (GPA, ACT/SAT score.)

9) Schedule a campus visit; evaluate your visit to consider “goodness of fit.”

10) Complete and submit online or paper applications for admission by deadlines.

11) Undertake the online PIN application process (for student and a parent), complete and submit, by priority deadlines for financial aid, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on the web (http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/).

12) Interpret the Student Aid Report (SAR), received after submitting the FAFSA, to determine EFC and financial need.
13) Interpret and compare Financial-Aid Award Offer letters from colleges to figure the “bottom line” (i.e., out-of-pocket expenses), monthly payments, and loan-debt.

14) Comply with “verification” process or request “reconsiderations” of financial-aid packages.

15) Decide a college to attend and which financial-aid package component(s) to accept.

16) If eligible, complete and submit an MVCAP Last-Dollar Scholarship Application by June 1.

APPENDIX

18. “GO TO COLLEGE: STEP BY STEP”

When it’s time to think about college, here to assist you is a step-by-step approach—developed over almost 10 years—by the Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP). Just do and/or consider items that follow during this year and you’ll be off to college after you graduate from high school!

1) Undertake a career exploration to identify matches between your strengths/interests and various fields/occupations, emphasizing preparation required and job-opportunities.

   1. Begin the career exploration by identifying your many strengths and interests—then seek careers that would make use of them.

   2. When you do a career exploration, determine what preparation a certain field requires—and what job opportunities exist!

4. For a pdf file of the actual report by the University of California, San Diego, click here:  

5. Perhaps the best question to ask yourself about careers is this: **What job would you still love to do on a cold, dark, rainy Monday morning?**

6. **Note:** You can view this point and the next one as an e-book at the following link:  
http://issuu.com/mvcap/docs/going_to_college

2) Begin a college search by determining which schools may best suit desired areas of study and academic programs as well as family finances.

7. Once you’ve determined your career interest(s), seek schools that offer your desired area(s) of study.

8. For information on colleges in Northeast Ohio, click this link:  

9. You may be interested in reading the Huffington Post article by Steve Leveen, "College: It’s not where you get in, but how you come out," at  
http://bit.ly/aP1M0x

10. To read the article "When Choosing A College, What Really Matters? click:  
http://www.unigo.com/articles/when_choosing_a_college_what_really_matters%5E63/?taxonomyId=760028

11. To read the article "Price of education is likely debt," click on this link:  

12. To see some hazards of taking on too much loan-debt for college, click:  

13. To see all Ohio colleges and universities, use that link under "OBR" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this link:  
http://regents.ohio.gov/colleges_universities.php

14. To see "Best Colleges 2010," use that link under "U.S. News & World Report" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this link:  
http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges

15. For "Historically Black Colleges & Universities," look under "U.S. News" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this link:  
http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/hbcu
16. For Part 2: "Answers on Historically Black Colleges and Universities," click this link: http://nyti.ms/bIpeWz

17. To see "National University Rankings," look under "U.S. News & World Report" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this link: http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities

18. To see "Liberal Arts Rankings," look under "U.S. News & World Report" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this link: http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-liberal-arts-colleges

19. To explore "Colleges That Change Lives," hit the link "CTCL Members" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this link: http://www.ctcl.org/

20. For "National Catholic College Admission Assoc.,"use "Search for a school" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this link: http://www.catholiccollegesonline.org/search.html

21. To continue your college search, think how close to home you want to stay; how large a school you'd like; & do you prefer public or private?

22. An important consideration in any college search is whether you can afford--with need-based & merit financial aid--a particular college.

23. One of the hazards in doing a college search today is neglecting to consider the "mountain of debt" you may be accumulating at some schools.

24. Maybe the key question to ask yourself about a college search is this one: in which school(s) can I not just survive--but really thrive!

25. Learn about your schools of interest at a free Virtual College Fair; register at http://www.collegeweeklive.com

26. GoodSearch or Google the Common Data Set for schools you're interested in; pay attention to Part C and H. To find out more, click this link: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/03/42-common-data-set-cds.html

27. If you are considering Ohio State, you can access its Common Data Set (CDS): http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/03/42-common-data-set-cds.html
28. If you are considering Miami (OH), you can access its Common Data Set (CDS): http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/03/42-common-data-set-cds.html

29. If you are considering Ohio U., you can print out its Common Data Set (CDS): http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/03/42-common-data-set-cds.html

3) Seek information about preparation, fee-waivers (if applicable), and registration, either online or mailing by deadlines, for the ACT. To do well on the ACT, you need to be ready; here is a sample preparation plan, drawn from the free pamphlet Preparing for the ACT. Start at least 6 weeks before you take it. (http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/preparing.pdf)

30. Now is the time to register for the next ACT; you can do this online (www.act.org)—if you have a valid credit card.
31. If you qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch at your school, you might get a fee-waiver to register for the ACT free; ask your counselor!
32. ACT score (0-36) is important—not just for admission to college but also to be awarded merit financial aid: the higher a score, the better!
33. The ACT is challenging because it's a power test—that is, one with time-limits for each section: students who don't finish may lose points.
34. Know the deadline to register for the ACT; if you miss the deadline, you will have to pay more. You can register online (www.act.org)—if you have a valid credit card.
35. At 5 weeks before the ACT: To do well, prepare—by knowing the test format (i.e., "test-wiseness") as well as the four content areas.
36. According to ACT, answer the easy questions first, skipping harder ones; then, return to the more difficult questions—if you have time (p. 3) (http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/preparing.pdf)
37. Per the ACT, "your score on the test will be based only on the number of questions you answer correctly" (p. 3)—therefore, answer every question. (http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/preparing.pdf)
38. ACT strategy: familiarize yourself with content of the 4 tests; refresh your knowledge and skills in each area; and know what you haven’t had.
39. A key to doing well on the ACT is practice: do the 4 practice tests in the free booklet Preparing for the ACT—and use a timer on each one!
40. At 4 weeks before the ACT: begin your practice by taking the Reading test (p. 34 of Preparing for the ACT); use a timer/watch.
41. On the ACT Reading test, there are 40 questions to finish in 35 minutes, which means you have less than 60 seconds per answer—so work fast!
42. The ACT Reading test asks what is explicitly stated in several texts as well as implicit meanings; hence, refer back to the passages often.
43. The ACT Reading test is based on four types of reading selections: social studies, natural sciences, prose fiction, and the humanities. (p. 8.) (http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/preparing.pdf)
44. There will be four passages in the ACT Reading test; scan the questions for each selection before reading so you’ll know what’s being asked.

45. At 3 weeks before the ACT: continue your practice by taking the English test (p. 14 of Preparing for the ACT); use a timer/watch.

46. On the ACT English test, there are 75 questions to finish in 45 minutes--which means, on average, 36 seconds per answer, so read/work fast!

47. The ACT English tests on punctuation, grammar/usage, sentence structure, strategy, organization, & style--but not on spelling & vocabulary (p. 6.)

48. The ACT English has five essays to read, followed by multiple choice questions--about an underlined portion, section, or the entire passage.

49. On ACT English, before you answer a question on an underlined portion, read what is underlined; if it is the best answer, mark "NO CHANGE." (p. 6.)

50. At 2 weeks before the ACT: continue your practice by taking the Math test (p. 26 of Preparing for the ACT); use a timer/watch.

51. On the ACT Math test, there are 60 questions to finish in 60 minutes--which means, on average, 1 minute per answer, so read and work fast!

52. ACT Math tests on pre-algebra, elementary algebra, intermediate algebra, coordinate geometry, plane geometry, and trigonometry--so review! (p. 7.)

53. “All the ACT Math problems can be solved without using a calculator”--in fact, some are best done without one; hence, choose when to use it! (p. 7.)

54. On ACT Math, solve the problem, locate your solution among the answer choices, make sure your answer is reasonable--then, check your work!

55. At 5 days until the ACT: continue practicing by taking the Science test (p. 42 of Preparing for the ACT); use a timer/watch.

56. 4 days until the ACT: the Science test is 40 questions in 35 minutes--which means less than 1 minute per answer: work fast!

57. 3 days until the ACT: the ACT Science tests on biology, chemistry, physics, and the Earth/space sciences--so get set! (p. 9.)

58. 2 days until the ACT: the ACT Science test emphasizes scientific reasoning skills over recall of scientific content.

59. 1 day until the ACT: remember to bring your admission ticket, acceptable ID, #2 pencils w/erasers, watch, and basic calculator.

60. If you took the ACT, exhale; if you didn’t, make certain you register by the next regular deadline.

4) Use an online estimator, like that on the website of the ACT (http://webapps01.act.org/fane/docs/) to determine your financial need by calculating the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) for the first year of college.
5) Compare your EFC to costs of any colleges of interest, via a website like the link on the ACT site at http://webapps01.act.org/fane/docs/

6) Search local resources, college viewbooks, and Internet sites to identify scholarships, tuition-discounts, and gift-aid.

61. Try using a free scholarship search & e-mail notification site, like Fastweb at the link http://www.fastweb.com/

7) Consider the advantage of Early-Decision and Early-Action options vs. regular admissions.

8) Select 3-6 colleges to apply to, based on the following student data:
   a. strengths and interests;
   b. desired career fields and corresponding academic programs;
   c. high school curriculum completed;
   d. grade-point average;
   e. ACT/SAT scores; and
   f. opportunity for financial aid, related to need (EFC) and merit (GPA, ACT/SAT score.)

62. Read blogs of 6 students on their college admission decisions at this link: http://bit.ly/xGU2J

63. Parents, Read This if Your Child Is Applying to College - Professors' Guide (usnews.com): http://bit.ly/5qwBPI


67. 5 simple tips for writing your college application essay: http://bit.ly/5iCVm

69. Straightforward college admissions advice from Vanderbilt's dean:  

70. To see all Ohio colleges and universities, use that link under "OBR" in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or click this link:  
http://regents.ohio.gov/colleges_universities.php

9) Schedule a campus visit with your parent(s) or other supportive adult(s); evaluate your visit to consider “goodness of fit.”

If you’re (still) trying to decide which college to attend, make a(nother) visit! Generally, you'll "feel" whether the college is a good match for you—that is, somewhere you'll thrive and just not survive. Since the deadline for responding to colleges' offer of admission is May 1, visit now; spend the night in a dorm room and attend a class, if you can, but be sure to call ahead to make arrangements.

For some thoughts on those visits, see the following links:


10) Complete and submit online or paper applications for admission by deadlines.

71. You can use the link "Online Applications" in the left margin of our blog:  
http://mvcap.blogspot.com/

72. To apply to several colleges, use the link “The Common Application” in the left margin of our MVCAP blog or at this URL:  
11) Both student and parent undertake the online PIN application process, complete and submit, by priority deadlines for financial aid, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on the web (http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/).

73. To be considered for financial aid, including federal and state grants, you must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

74. To start your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), student and parent apply for a PIN at http://www.pin.ed.gov/PINWebApp/pinindex.jsp

75. To see a Draft FAFSA for 2010-2011, click that link under FAFSA in the left margin of our MVCAP blog at http://mvcap.blogspot.com/

76. To see which documents students and parents will need to file the FAFSA, they can check out this link: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/before003.htm

77. If your goal is to file a FAFSA by February 1 for priority consideration for financial aid, prepare your IRS Form 1040, 1040 EZ, or 1040 A now!

78. To view "The Five Minute FAFSA Video" for an introduction to completing that form, check out a link: http://www.finaid.org/fafsa/video.phtml

79. To search for a Federal School Code before filing your FAFSA online, check out this link: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/FOTWWebApp/FSLookupServlet

80. Start completing a 2011-2012 FAFSA on the Web Worksheet from your guidance office--or download one at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/before012.htm

81. To learn more about financial aid, click this link to our blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/1-confused-about-college-financial-aid.html

82. To begin understanding the concept of "financial need," click this link to our blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/2-financial-need.html

83. To get an overview of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), click this link: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/3-fafsa.html

84. To learn about the Student Aid Report (SAR) you'll receive after filing the FAFSA, click here: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/4-sar.html

85. To learn about the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) you'll get from filing a FAFSA, click: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/5-efc.html
86. To learn about a Financial-Aid Package a college will award you, click here: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/6-financial-aid-package.html

87. To learn about Gift-Aid a college may put in your financial-aid package, click this link: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2009/11/7-gift-aid.html


89. See how students with an EFC of $0 can go to college locally:

90. To see an outline of common criteria for merit aid, click this link to our MVCAP blog:

91. To read an explanation of need-based aid, click this link to our MVCAP blog:

92. To calculate how much a college may cost you, check out this link:

93. To read an update from Money on college costs, click this link:

94. To see a survey on how U.S. families pay for college, click:

95. To learn about saving for college with a 529 plan, click this link:

96. To compare the tuition of 168 colleges in Ohio, click:
    http://www.collegeview.com/SearchSchools.do?state=48&location=1500&referLocation=4860

97. To see tax credits for college in the stimulus bill, click:

98. Watch an ABC 20/20 video and decide "Is College Worth It?" here:
99. To read about students choosing colleges in this recession, click:

100. See factors—including finances—that stress college dropouts:

101. Read an article on the average loan-debt of college seniors:

102. To access the information on financial aid of FinAid! just click this link:

103. To find information on financial aid from the College Board, click here:

104. To find information on financial aid from Peterson’s, access this site:

105. To see information on financial aid from the U.S. Dept. of Ed., click here:

106. For student accounts of loan-debt from college, hit this from HuffPost College:

107. Lindsay Carroll, 21, Pitt, has $15,000 loan-debt; see why at HuffPost College:

108. To seek scholarship opportunities that may fit you, investigate fastweb at
http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/02/40-search-for-scholarships.html

12) Interpret the Student Aid Report (SAR), received after submitting the FAFSA, to determine EFC and financial need.

13) Interpret and compare Financial-Aid Award Offer letters from colleges to figure the “bottom line” (i.e., out-of-pocket expenses), monthly payments, and loan-debt.

109. To decipher your financial-aid award offer letters, read Part I of Lynn O’Shaughnessy’s article at this link:
http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/03/44-understanding-financial-aid-award.html

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110. To analyze your financial-aid award offer letters, read Part II:
    http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/03/44-understanding-financial-aid-award.html

111. Now, calculate the "net price" of the college(s) you'd like to attend:

112. Next, figure the up-front, out-of-pocket cost of your college(s):

113. An important question to ask, according to Penelope Wang in her article from the April 2010 *Money* magazine, is "Can we afford this college?"


117. Private colleges or universities can discount tuition for students; click this link: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/62-discounts-for-college-tuition.html

118. If you're still seeking money for college, see some unusual scholarships: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/63-unusual-scholarships.html


120. Shop around for college loans; check out the article on our MVCAP blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/58-shopping-for-student-loans.html


For a compilation of links about college loans, refer to this posting on our blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/57-college-loans.html

To review the statistics on student borrowing for college, click this posting on our blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/64-who-borrows-most.html

To read Lynn O'Shaughnessy's "12 Facts About Student Loan Borrowers," click this link to our blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/64-who-borrows-most.html

May 1 is the deadline to let a college or university know if you plan to enroll there; be sure to meet that deadline: act today, if you haven't already!

You go to college to graduate; for graduation rates of Ohio colleges & universities, click: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/65-graduation-rates-in-ohio.html


Need to borrow money to pay for college? Learn the differences between federal and private loans at http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/05/69-government-or-private-loans.html


Still short of money to pay for college? See this link on our blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/05/71-still-need-money-for-college.html

If your 1st-choice college plan doesn't work out, have a Plan B; hit this link to our blog: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/05/73-plan-b.html

If necessary, request "reconsiderations" of financial-aid packages.

If you can't afford to attend the college of your choice, you can ask your financial-aid officer to "reconsider" your financial-aid award; click: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/04/50-ask-for-reconsideration.html

15) Decide a college to attend and which financial-aid package component(s) to accept.

If you must consider a private loan for college, shop around! Hit: http://mvcap.blogspot.com/2010/05/78-interest-rates-vary-for-private.html
If you need more financial aid for college, link to our MVCAP blog:

Once you know your financial-aid package, inquire what your first bill will be & when it’s due; then, make sure you'll have money to pay it!

16) If eligible, complete and submit an MVCAP Last-Dollar Scholarship Application by June 1.

Advised by MVCAP, have an EFC <$4,000, & unmet need >$1,000? Apply: http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/03/46-mvcap-last-dollar-scholarship.html

TO-DOs:

Before focusing on college, finish senior year well: work hard through the last day of classes, turn in your assignments, & pass all tests and exams.

Before focusing on college, finish your senior year well: turn in all textbooks, pay any fines owed, & thank your teachers & administrators.

Your college will want a final transcript from your high school; therefore, make certain you have met all obligations--academic & financial.

If you question whether you should go to college, others also wonder; click this article on our blog: http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/05/75-is-college-degree-essential.html

You may have to take remedial coursework in college; for info, click our blog: http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/05/74-remedial-coursework.html

Is college necessary? For some info, click this link to our MVCAP blog: http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/05/77-do-you-need-to-go-to-college.html

If you wonder what % of various groups goes to college & earns a degree, click this link to our MVCAP blog: http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/05/76-higher-education-data.html

See a "to-do" list before starting college at this link on our blog:
http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/05/72-to-do-list-before-leaving-for.html

See what to take to college as a freshman at this link to our MVCAP blog: http://mvicap.blogspot.com/2010/05/82-what-to-take-to-college.html

You may be able to save money on many items you’ll need for your college dorm room by picking them up this summer at yard & garage sales!
147. For a funny, informative, first-hand student view of college, access the KnowHow2GOOhio blog at http://knowhow2goohio.wordpress.com/

148. Remember: the point of college isn’t just going—it’s to graduate. You can go to college—and graduate! Best of luck to you now & always.

19. Additional Links: Cost

22. "College: More Expensive than Ever"
Read the article from Money at this link:


23. "Survey Finds That Many Families Don’t Borrow for College"
See an article from The New York Times at this link:


24. "529 Savings Plan for College"
Check out a column on saving for college at this link:

http://www.minyanville.com/articles/college_costs+saving/index/a/24201#

To read Lynn O'Shaughnessy’s post on how much 529 plan savings will affect your expected family contribution (EFC), derived from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), click this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college_solution/the-no-1-fear-of-529-plan-investors/2164/?tag=col1;blog-river

28. "College Applicants Forgo 'Dream Schools' in Recession"
Here’s a link to this article of interest from the Boulder (CO) Daily Camera:

http://www.dailycamera.com/cu-news/ci_13604363

To read a summary of the various guides that "rank" colleges, click on the post "Which College Rankings Set Should You Use," by Danielle Wiener-Bronner on The Huffington Post of 9/14/10, at this link:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/danielle-wienerbronner/which-college-rankings-se_b_716526.html

31. "College Dropouts Cite Low Money and High Stress"
Here’s an article of importance on why college students drop out from The New York Times at this link:
32. "Average Debt for Graduating College Seniors Rises to $23,200"
Here’s an article from The New York Times on college student loan debt at this link:


38. Financial-Aid Websites
You can click on any of these websites for resources on financial-aid for college:

1. FinAid!--http://www.finaid.org/
3. Peterson’s--
   http://www.petersons.com/finaid/file.asp?id=906&path=ug.pfs.advice&sponsor=1
4. Student Aid on the Web (Federal Student Aid)--
   http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp

39. Student Loan-Debt
To read first-hand, student accounts of being in debt from college expenses, click on this series from HuffPost College:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/22/college-debt_n_471023.html?slidenumber=1mvKlgmw4aI%3D&&&slideshow#slide_image

40. Search for Scholarships
To search for scholarships that may interest you, you can access the following website:

http://www.fastweb.com/login

43. Student Loan-Debt, Part II
To read about hazards of taking on too much loan-debt for college, click on the following links:

b. re: community college students--

44. Understanding Financial-Aid Award Offer Letters
To decipher the financial-aid award offer letter a student will get from any college that has accepted his/her application for admission and received that student's FAFSA data, click these links by Lynn O'Shaughnessy from her articles on thecollegesolutionblog.com:


45. Calculating the Net Price of a College
Daniel de Vise, blogging in The Washington Post at College Inc., stated the following:

"All colleges will be required to post a 'net price calculator' on their web sites by fall 2011. 'Net price' is what a student actually pays to attend, after subtracting discounts and grant aid from the sticker price."

In addition, de Vise quoted Jeff Whorley, President of StudentAid.com, as follows: "Net price is sticker price minus merit and need-based grants. Up-front, out-of-pocket cost is the net price minus work-study and government loans."

Calculate the net price of a college you are interested in and determine your "up-front, out-of-pocket cost" to make certain you can afford to attend.

To read a report, released by The College Board in mid-September of 2010, on "discounting" (i.e., reducing tuition/fees through merit scholarships) by both private and public colleges, click on this link:


47. Verification
If your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has been selected for verification, read the post by Doug Schantz of CheapScholar.org at this link:

http://cheapscholar.org/2010/03/30/help-i-have-been-selected-for-financial-aid-verification/

49. "Can We Afford This College?"
In the April 2010 *Money*, Penelope Wang writes an article entitled "Can We Afford This College?" After students are accepted to a college, have filed their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and receive their financial-aid award offer letter, they and their parent(s) need to ask this same question. Ask it before the May 1 deadline to indicate to the college they will enroll; don’t wait until the first bill arrives in August. If you can’t make ends meet without taking on significant loan-debt, now’s the time to consider other college possibilities.

Writer Lynn O'Shaughnessy advises students and parent to get a "financial aid pre-read" early in the college-search process. You can see her column "What's This College Really Going To Cost," posted online on 9/9/10, at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/whats-this-college-really-going-to-cost/3007/?tag=col1;blog-river

50. **Ask for a Reconsideration**

If you can not afford to attend the college of your choice and hope more financial aid might enable you to enroll, you can ask your financial-aid officer to "reconsider" your financial-aid award. You may be asked to present financial-aid award offer letters from comparable colleges, complete a form on any "special circumstances" important to consider, or provide other information--but take a chance! Be polite, speak for yourself (rather than having a parent make the contact), and avoid using the term "negotiate." Stress that the college is your first choice and you’d like to attend, but your financial-aid award won't let you do that; therefore, can it be "reconsidered"?

For suggestions on how to do this, read the blog posting by Lynn O'Shaughnessy at this link:


Also, check out the post, "Fight for Financial Aid the Smart Way," by Peter McDougall at this link: http://ow.ly/1vhOM

Finally, Sandra J. Oliveira--Executive Director, Office of Financial Aid at Providence College--offers advice on appealing your financial-aid award at this link from *The New York Times*:


52. **Tuition at Public Flagship Universities in the U.S.**
To see tuitions during 2009-2010 at public flagship universities in the U.S., click the following link to a database in USA TODAY:

To see the annual revenue and number of students enrolled by some of the largest for-profit companies/universities, click this link to an article in The Wall Street Journal, dated August 30, 2010:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703418004575455773289209384.html?mod=WSJ_article_related

To read the article by Stephanie Chen, "For-profit college risk: Huge debt, questionable degree," posted on 9/2/10, at CNN online, click this link:


54. College Scholarships
Many students—and their parents—want to know how to get a college scholarship. The simple answer is "Be an attractive candidate for one"—that is, have a high grade-point average (GPA) in a rigorous course of study, earn a top class-rank, and score well on the ACT or SAT. In other words, be the type of student any college would love to have enroll—and might offer a scholarship to facilitate that. But there are other ways as well. For some ideas, check out the following links to these blog-posts by Lynn O'Shaughnessy:


2. "The Best Places to Find College Cash"—
http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-best-places-to-find-college-cash/442/?tag=content;col1

3. "The Myth About College Scholarships"—
http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-myth-about-college-scholarships/312/?tag=content;col1

55. How Do Elite Schools Determine Prices?
For one opinion on why elite colleges and universities are expensive, see the opinion piece by Andrew Manshel, "Why Top Colleges Squeeze You Dry," in The Wall Street Journal on April 9, 2010, at this link:
57. College Loans
Today, many students—and their parents—will likely consider loans to pay for college. Indeed, some may come to regard a loan as the "four-letter word" of financial aid! To learn more about borrowing for college, Lynn O'Shaughnessy has compiled several of her blog-posts on loans, "Best College Loan Advice: 9 Tips for Borrowing for College," at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/best-college-loan-advice-9-tips-for.borrowing-for-college/1864/?tag=col1;blog-river

58. Shopping for Student Loans
Before a student takes out loans to pay for college, he or she and their family should investigate available options. Specifically, they should consider the kinds of loans offered as well as interest rates and repayment obligations. To become aware of these possibilities, read the blog-post by Lynn O'Shaughnessy entitled "Find the Right Student Loan" at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/find-the-right.student-loan/371/?tag=col1;blog-river

59. How Much Should a Student Borrow for College?
A question students ask in regard to college loans is "How much should I borrow?" With the hazards of loan-debt so publicized today, this is an important question to ponder. Lynn O'Shaughnessy addresses this issue in her blog-post "College Debt: Don't Borrow More Than $27,000" at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/college-debt-dont.borrow-more-than-27000/1521/?tag=col1;blog-river

60. How Much Should Parents Borrow for College?
Even after considering all elements a student may receive in his/her financial-aid package, they may still need more money to pay for a particular college or university. In that case, parents often consider taking out loans to assist their child. However, how much parents should borrow is often not addressed. Lynn O'Shaughnessy confronts this issue in her blog-post "College Loans: How Much Should Parents Borrow?" at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/college.loans-how.much.should.parents.borrow/1510/?tag=col1;blog-river

61. Do Many Students Take Out College Loans?
Borrowing to pay college expenses is becoming a necessity for more students. The percentage of students who have college loans is growing, as Lynn
O'Shaughnessy discusses in her blog-post "The Soaring Popularity of College Student Loans" at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/the-soaring-popularity-of-college-student-loans/545/?tag=col1;blog-river

62. Discounts for College Tuition
Many private colleges and universities give students a cut in the price they must pay to attend. This practice, called "discounting," comes through the financial-aid package granted--which may amount to several thousand dollars and can enable a student to afford that school. The extent of these discounts and reasons for them are addressed by Lynn O'Shaughnessy in her blog-post "College Tuition: Schools Cutting Prices at Historic Levels" at this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/college-tuition-schools-cutting-prices-at-historic-levels/1905/?tag=col1;blog-river

63. Unusual Scholarships
From time to time, you'll hear someone say this: "There are lots of scholarships out there!" Unfortunately, many of them stay out there--rather than in some student's pocket. Nonetheless, there do exist scholarships that are, in fact, awarded for unusual reasons--sometimes, unrelated to academics. Jillian Mincer wrote in The Wall Street Journal of April 16, 2010, about such scholarships in an article entitled "If You're a Tall Vegan Named Zolp, Your Tuition Worries Are Over." You can read her account at this link:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304198004575172073856320424.html?KEYWORDS=If+you%27re+a+tall+vegan+named+zolp

64. Who Borrows the Most?
Borrowing for college is an important issue today, as student loan-debt increases--sometimes to scary levels. To read a report by Sandy Baum and Patricia Steele for The College Board entitled "Who Borrows Most? Bachelor’s Degree Recipients with High Levels of Student Debt," click this link:


To read Lynn O'Shaughnessy's highlights of this report, check out her blog-post:


69. Government or Private Loans?

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Students and their parents who need to borrow to pay for college should research their options for loans—specifically, whether they are better off taking out federal student loans or private loans. More than simply interest rates and terms of repayment are involved in this consideration. To see some comparisons between government and private loans, read the post by Sandra Block on May 4, 2010, in USA Today at this link:


71. Still Need Money For College?
If you're still seeking money to pay for college, read Kim Clark's "11 Steps to Raise Last-Minute Cash for College," posted April 29, 2010, at the US News & World Report online site; just click this link:


73. Plan B
Sometimes, a student’s college plans fall through—because of finances, an emergency in their family, or other reasons. Then, he or she needs a Plan B—to still attend college, though under different circumstances, perhaps, than they had previously envisioned. If that’s your situation, you may be interested in reading the May 6, 2010, post "When college dream derails, time for Plan B," by William Hageman in the Chicago Tribune, at this link:

http://www.kansascity.com/2010/05/05/1927547/when-college-dream-derails-time.html#ixzz0nGnv7O3M

78. Interest Rates Vary for Private Student Loans!
Students—and their parents—often have to borrow money to pay for college. Despite taking out all federal student loans for which they qualify, some still consider private student loans. To get the best (lowest) rates of interest on these loans, shop around! In a blog-post, dated 5/14/10, Lynn O'Shaughnessy states: "The interest rates that lenders offer on private student loans are wildly different even for borrowers with the same credit scores." To read her entire post, click this link:


80. How to Get More Financial Aid
Perhaps the most frequent question students and parents ask about paying for college is "Do you know of any scholarships out there?" What they're really wondering is how can I get more—and pay less—to attend college. Financial aid
can help. But to maximize a student’s financial-aid package, some tips may be useful. Jane J. Kim wrote an article in *The Wall Street Journal* on May 22-23, 2010, that offers such advice; you can access it at this link:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703612804575222303415618316.html

**81. Athletic Scholarships Can Be Revoked.**
What many student-athletes and their parents often don’t realize is that Division I "full-ride" scholarships can be revoked after one year. This revocation can cause students to have to "walk on"--or, if they decide to, transfer to another institution. For more information, click this link to an article by Alan Scher Zagier on *The Huffington Post*:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/05/24/revoked-scholarships-surp_n_586854.html

**83. Paying Off Federal Student Loans**
If you accept federal student loans, you’re obligated to repay them--whether you graduate from college or not. Consequently, you should limit the amount of loan-debt you acquire. For information on repaying your federal loans, see this article, dated May 25, 2010, by Sandra Block in *USA Today*, at this link:


**84. Sticker Price vs. Net Cost of a College**
Often, students and parents are scared off from applying to a particular college or university because it seems high-priced. Rather than focusing on the stated "sticker price," however, a prospective applicant needs to determine their own "net cost"--that is, what they would have to pay after all financial aid for which they are eligible has been deducted from the published cost of attendance (i.e., "sticker price"). To read Lynn O'Shaughnessy’s post on this issue, click this link to her blog:


**85. Federal Direct Loan Program**
The Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, which takes effect July 1, 2010, requires that all federal student loans be offered through direct lending rather than from private lenders. Government fees previously paid to lending banks are to be used to expand the federal Pell Grant program, raising the full grant-award to an estimated $5,975 by 2017. To read an explanatory article, dated May 26, 2010, by Caralee Adams in *Education Week*, click this link:
86. Who is to Blame for Student Loan-Debt?
When a student graduates from college with a huge loan-debt, people may ask: "Who is to blame?" You can decide responsibility after reading this case study by Ron Lieber in The New York Times of May 29, 2010, at this link:


97. New Rules on Federal Student Loans
Effective July 1, 2010, new rules go into effect for those taking out federal student loans. Now, only the U.S. Dept. of Education will offer these loans. In addition, interest for subsidized Stafford loans will decrease to fixed rate of 4.5% for undergraduates. The federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) will have a fixed rate of 7.9%. For other information on these loan changes, see the article "Student Loans Get a Makeover," by Jane J. Kim in The Wall Street Journal of July 3-4, 2010, at this link:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704334604575338883122321008.html

98. Yearly Cost of College Per Student
The cost per year to educate a college student can be expensive. And that cost varies, depending on the type of educational institution. For example, U.S. community colleges spend almost $10,000 per year, while private research universities spend $35,000 per year; the average cost in the United States is about $19,000 per student. For these and other data, see the article "Share of College Budgets For Recreation Is Rising," by Sam Dillon in The New York Times of July 10, 2010, at this link:


48. 2010 Admission Rates
To see what percentage of all applicants were accepted to a number of public and private universities, click this link to The New York Times:


To read the comments of Kevin Carey on admission rates, see his blog-post of April 19, 2010, entitled "Real College-Acceptance Rates Are Higher Than You Think," at this link:
To read a summary of the various guides that "rank" colleges, click on the post "Which College Rankings Set Should You Use," by Danielle Wiener-Bronner on The Huffington Post of 9/14/10, at this link:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/danielle-wienerbronner/which-college-rankings-se_b_716526.html

56. Wait-List
Sometimes, a college or university won't either accept or reject a student's application for admission--rather, it will put them on its "wait-list." These lists can range in size from hundreds to thousands of students who still await a decision on their application's acceptance or rejection. Many students will opt not to keep a place on the wait-list and, instead, decide to accept another school's offer of admission. Other applicants, however, decide to remain on the wait-list until they hear, one way or the other, if they will be asked to enroll.

To read Lynn O'Shaughnessy's blog-post "Getting Off a College Wait List: 5 Things to Do Now," click this link:

http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/getting-off-a-college-wait-list-things-to-do-now/1846/?tag=coll;blog-river

To read "The Early Line on Admission Yields (and Wait-List Offers)," by Jacques Steinberg in his blog of May 12, 2010, for The New York Times, click this link: http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/12/yield-3/#more-20099

65. Graduation Rates in Ohio
As the cost of college increases, more attention is being paid to the percentage of students who graduate from particular schools. A report entitled "Diplomas and Dropouts: Which Colleges Actually Graduate Their Students (and Which Don't)," dated June 2009, was written by Frederick M. Hess, Mark Schneider, Kevin Carey, and Andrew P. Kelly as A Project of the American Enterprise Institute.

Using 6-year percentages reported by the colleges and universities to the U. S. Department of Education for the student cohort enrolling in 2001, the authors compared graduation rates by various levels of schools' selectivity, according to groupings in Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges. The 6-year graduation rates for colleges and universities in Ohio from this report (pp. 59-61) have been copied and pasted below in this link to our MVCAP blog.

The entire report can be accessed at this link:
66. **Transfer Admissions**
Many students—approximately 1/3—will transfer from one college to another before graduating. The criteria used for transfer admissions can be different from those employed for high school seniors and can vary from private to public institutions. So, too, can admissions rates differ. A report by the National Association for College Admission Counseling discusses these topics; you can read an article from *Inside HigherEd* on this report at the following link:


67. **College-Going Rates**
The U.S. Department of Labor indicated on April 27, 2010, that the percentage of high-school graduates going on to college is rising. In 1999, 62.9% matriculated to higher education, while 68.6% did so in 2008. By 2009, 70.1% of U.S. graduates (ages 16-24) opted for postsecondary education.

Rates varied by gender, with 66% of males matriculating compared to 73.8% of females from the high school Class of 2009.

To read Sara Murphy's article, "Grads Head to College In Record Numbers," from *The Wall Street Journal* of April 28, 2010, click this link:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703832204575210244203411342.html?mod=e2tw

68. **Who Graduates in Four Years?**
To determine the impact of advising by the Mahoning Valley College Access Program (MVCAP), names from its electronic database (in the software Prep HQ) of former advisees in the Class of 2004—the first loaded online—were submitted to the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) to check matriculation and graduation rates with the National College Clearinghouse data. Results can be seen at this link to our MVCAP blog.

To read the article "College students take longer to graduate," by Cliff Peale in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* on May 3, 2010, which lists cohort graduation rates of Cincinnati-area colleges and universities, click this link:

http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20100503/NEWS0102/5030326/College+students+take+longer+to+graduate

70. **Space Availability Survey 2010**
For those high school seniors or prospective transfer students still looking for a college, the Space Availability Survey Results 2010--issued on May 5, 2010, by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)--may be of interest and assistance; to access it, just click this link:

http://www.nacacnet.org/PublicationsResources/Research/SpaceAvailabilitySurvey/Pages/SpaceSurveyResults.aspx

**72. To-Do List Before Leaving for College**

High school seniors heading off to college in the fall have much to do before they leave; at this link is a list of 10 things to do from the Admission Possible blog:


**74. Remedial Coursework**

Many community colleges and public universities give admitted students tests on math and reading before they enroll. If scores are not at the school’s standard, remedial courses must be completed before college-level coursework can be taken. To read an article from *USA Today* about the need for remedial math and reading in U.S. higher education, click this link:


**75. Is a College Degree Essential?**

Many students--and their parents--wonder whether everyone really *needs* a college degree. Given the time, effort, and money involved, many are unsure if college is right--or necessary--for them. Well, each student’s situation is unique: what is their best fit in the world of higher education and careers? For one article on this question, from the Associated Press on May 14, 2010, click this link:

http://www.vindy.com/news/2010/may/14/is-college-degree-essential/

For an extended version of the same article, click this link:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/05/13/college-for-all-experts-s_n_575396.html

**76. Higher-Education Data**

What percentage of various groups in the U.S. graduates from high school? Goes to college? Earns a degree? This article by Erik W. Robelen for *Education Week*, posted on May 14, 2010, presents these data on higher education, at this link:
77. Do You Need to Go to College?
Students sometimes inquire, "Do I need to go to college?" Or, put another way, they ask: "Can I get a good job without a college degree?" Jacques Steinberg, a writer for The New York Times, addresses these questions in his article, dated 5/14/10, at this link:

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/weekinreview/16steinberg.html?pagewanted=1

79. Non-traditional College Students
Many college students today are not 18 year-olds, fresh out of high school; they're over 20, work (full- or part-time), and are often parents. For these non-traditional students, earning a college degree can mean overcoming many obstacles to graduate. Read an article from USA Today on non-traditional students at this link:


82. What to Take to College
Freshmen often wonder what to take to college. Some take too much, while others don't take enough. Like the three bears, aim for just right--because your space will be limited! To see an Off-to-College Checklist of The College Board, click this link:


And don't forget: you may be able to save money on many items you'll need for your college dorm room by picking them up at yard & garage sales!

87. Retention Rate
According to the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, a college's retention rate is "the percentage of first-time students who are seeking bachelor's degrees who return to the institution to continue their studies the following fall." Retention rate is regarded as an important statistic relating to student success in college. To discover the retention rate of a U.S. college or university, click the link below, then type in the school's name to search for it; finally, click on "retention and graduation rates."

http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/
To see the retention rates of students having differing ACT scores and admitted to colleges with varying rates of selectivity, consult the ACT report "National Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates" at this link:


88. Is College the Key to Success?
In America, we hear that getting a good education--particularly, earning a college degree--will lead to career success. Today, more and more people are entering college; they are expecting an economic payoff. But is this expectation realistic? Ann Larson examines "the education gospel" in her post, dated June 3, 2010, for Inside Higher Ed entitled "Higher Education's Big Lie;" you can read her views at this link:

http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/06/03/larson

89. World's Best Universities?
If you wonder which country has the highest-rated universities in the world, you're not alone. Apparently, others wonder, too. U.S. News & World Report ranked 400 of the "World's Best Universities" in 2010; to see its list, hit this link:


90. Graduation Rates in U.S.
To find out "Student Success Highlights" (i.e., retention rate, four-year graduation rate, five-year graduation rate, and six-year graduation rate) of any college or university in the United States, check out a website of The Education Trust called "College Results Online." (You can also compare success statistics for various schools.) Access the site at this link:

http://www.collegeresults.org/

91. Value in a Liberal Arts Education?
During this challenging economic climate, students and parents expect college to aid one's career. Consequently, they often seek majors, programs, and degrees that will lead directly to a specific job--and a well-paying one, at that. Nonetheless, defenders of a liberal arts education still emphasize its value; to see why, read this post by Michael Roth, President of Wesleyan University, entitled "Coming to the Defense of Liberal Education," at this link:


92. Academic Progress Rate (APR)
The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) requires member colleges and universities to submit information on all sports teams competing in Division I. These data indicate student-athletes' eligibility and retention during a previous four-year period; the most recent APR is based on statistics from the 2005-06 through 2008-09 school years. If a team’s APR is less than 925 (of 1,000), it can face penalties, including loss of scholarships or limits on practice time. Teams having an APR lower than 900 for several years can be penalized by being banned from postseason play— including bowl games.

To search the Academic Progress Rate for schools of interest, click this NCAA link:

http://web1.ncaa.org/maps/aprRelease.jsp

**93. Proportion of Adults, 25-34, with College Degrees**
The U.S. national average for the proportion of adults (ages 25-34) holding college degrees is 37.8%; in Ohio, however, the figure is below that— at 36.4%. To see the percentage for any state, you can access an interactive map from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* at this link:

http://chronicle.com/article/Interactive-Map-Proportion-of/65009/

**94. U.S. Senate Hearings on For-Profit Higher Education**
On June 24, 2010, Chairman Tom Harkin opened hearings by the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on for-profit higher education. At the outset, a report was issued; to read this document, "Emerging Risk?: An Overview of Growth, Spending, Student Debt and Unanswered Questions in For-Profit Higher Education," copy and paste this link:


**96. College Return on Investment (ROI)**
With tuitions up and jobs scarce, it is understandable to question whether college is really worth it. To help quantify this decision, some have applied the concept of return on investment (ROI). According to *The Huffington Post*, "ROI takes the price of a school's degree and compares it to how much that school's graduates earn on average, producing perhaps the truest measure of a school's value." To see which U.S. colleges have the highest ROI, click this link:


To find out which college in each state has the highest ROI, click this link to *Business Week*:
99. From Access to Success
Providing students access to higher education used to be the goal of many organizations. Today, however, emphasis is being placed on student success in college— that is, graduating. To read the report "From Access to Success," released by Grantmakers for Education on July 22, 2010, click this link:


20. Links with excerpts

1. Here's What Will Revolutionize Higher Education http://t.co/pghC9Ir

"What is this game changer? Here’s the short answer: a cost calculator that families will use to determine what the price of a particular college will be for a specific student. I know that hardly sounds sexy, but it will be revolutionary. I happen to believe this and it’s also the conclusion of a new white paper released by Maguire Associates, a higher-ed consulting firm."

2. RT @USATODAY Can an online degree help advance your career? http://usat.me/40410834

"Only about half of respondents to a Society for Human Resource Management survey this summer said online degrees are just as credible as traditional degrees. The human resource professionals also said online credentials were less acceptable for higher-level positions; just 15% said online degrees were acceptable for an executive position."

3. Peering Behind the Financial-Aid Curtain
http://chronicle.com/blogPost/Peering-Behind-the/27367/

"A big part of the problem, Mr. Perez and his co-presenters agreed, is that colleges don't tell prospective families or counselors enough about how they distribute aid." I think most admissions officers, frankly, try to avoid or minimize talking about financial aid," said Mary Hill, co-director of college counseling at St. Paul Academy and Summit School, in Minnesota."

4. A College Turns to Tactics as Its Strategy Forms
http://chronicle.com/blogPost/A-College-Turns-to-Tactics-as/27364/

"Drury, which is in Springfield, Mo., attracted prospective students from across the country. After traveling to the campus, their first stop at Drury would usually be the
bathroom. And the bathrooms were not pretty, Ms. Hiles said. She had them refurbished. The admissions office was in a converted building, and was unattractive. So Ms. Hiles had Drury build a welcome center."

5. Retirement funds tapped for kids’ tuition http://t.co/Qvf7UON

"The main problem with raiding retirement accounts for college is that it triggers big tax penalties compared to other types of investment plans. Even taking a loan out against a 401(k) can be dangerous, because it has to be paid back within 5 years, or immediately when the borrower changes jobs. Also, when retirement accounts are tapped for college, that money counts as adjusted gross income and will reduce the amount of financial aid a family qualifies for the following year by as much as 47%, according to Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of Fastweb.com and FinAid.org."

6. RT @USATODAY Families can better afford college if they strategize early http://usat.me/40460924

"One key is applying to a variety of schools — public, private, in-state, and a local community college as a backup plan, recommends admissions consultant Katherine Cohen of ApplyWise.com. In an online survey of 137 families with college-bound students, ApplyWise and media partner NextStepU found that more than a third said it was likely that their child would go to community college for two years, then transfer to a four-year school. In 2008, only 13% said that was likely. Make sure every school you apply to is one you would be happy to attend, but also make sure you have one you can get into and afford, Cohen says. "You have to think about fit in so many ways."

7. Families are trimming plans to pay for college, survey finds: http://wapo.st/btrW5s

"On average, families have saved about $28,000 to pay for college. About 12 percent of that money is in 529 plans, while 14 percent comes from general savings accounts or certificates of deposit. Another 21 percent comes from investments, but the largest portion of that money - 23 percent - is in retirement savings."

8. The Most Expensive Colleges: Forbes List (PHOTOS) http://huff.to/9YgRyc Huffington Post

"In compiling their list, Forbes evaluated the schools according to highest tuition, fees and room and board costs, using data collected by the Chronicle of Higher Education and Campus Grotto. This year, Sarah Lawrence College -- alma mater of newly-announced Chicago mayoral hopeful Rahm Emmanuel -- takes the first slot, at $57,556 per year."

9. 7 Ways to Succeed in Community College http://t.co/zH9zKe7
"Before selecting a community college, review how it fared in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. The CCSSE, which is based at a nonprofit on the University of Texas, Austin campus, attempts to measure the academic excellence at community colleges. Students at participating community colleges fill out questionnaires on such topics as student and faculty interactions and academic rigor. You can find scores for individual schools at the CCSSE website."

10. The Worst U.S. College Crime Areas (INFOGRAPHIC) [http://huff.to/9hkdu1](http://huff.to/9hkdu1) Huffpost -

Which Ohio universities are on this list?

11. How Much Will Parents Pay for College? [http://t.co/91ld49m](http://t.co/91ld49m)

"Considering that college represents the second biggest expense for many families, parents and teenagers aren’t spending a lot of time talking about this milestone. According to the survey, only half of parents have had detailed discussions with their teenagers about college by the time their children are half way through their senior year in high school. Most of the rest of the families have had general conversations, while 3% haven’t discussed college at all."


"From the 1970s to the 1990s, the proportion of students who completed a bachelor’s degree in four years shrank by 13 percentage points, said Sarah Turner, a professor of economics and education at the University of Virginia and the author of the research. These days earning a bachelor's degree takes at least five years, Ms. Turner said. The decline, however, was found mostly at public four-year universities that are not flagship institutions, she said. In fact, at highly selective private institutions, the number of students completing their degrees in four years increased by 8 percent between 1972 and 1992." This is very much a story of stratification," Ms. Turner said. One explanation for the decline at public colleges, Ms. Turner suggested, is that students today often find it hard to finance their educations and have to work during college. Work is crowding students' time to take courses."

13. Pay for 8 years of college on 1 salary [http://t.co/iLu6eyd](http://t.co/iLu6eyd) via @CNNMoney

"Spend the kids' assets first. Aid offices assess money in a student's name at 20%, vs. up to 6% for a parent's money. So Amy should spend her kids' savings accounts and bonds before the 529s--the latter is typically considered a parental asset."


"But the American Dream is more than access to college. It's about a complete education and the better future that comes with it: a steady income, a rewarding career, a home in a nice neighborhood where you'd want to raise your family. Increasingly, to achieve those goals,
students have to get a college degree or a professional certificate after high school. According to every measure -- employment rates, wage premiums, labor forecasts -- students who get those credentials can seize opportunities that those who stopped their education with high school can’t. In 1973, only about one-quarter of the American workforce needed a postsecondary degree or credential in order to get or hold on to a job. In 2007, that figure hit 57 percent. New research predicts that, by 2018, 63 percent of jobs in America will require an education beyond high school. Unable to find enough skilled workers here, U.S. businesses are outsourcing millions of high-skill, high-wage jobs to Germany, Japan, Singapore, Korea.

15. [http://huff.to/djphS8](http://huff.to/djphS8) Huffpost - College: It Pays

"According to a College Board report released earlier this month, college graduates on average earned about $22,000 more than those with just a high school diploma ($55,700 compared to $33,800) in 2008. What’s more troubling is that the gulf between the two has increased by 13 percent since 2005. And with the economy in tatters, there’s probably little doubt who’s suffering more. Unemployment has jumped for both college graduates and for those with a high school diploma. However, the gap in the unemployment rate between the two groups has more than doubled in the last five years. The point is if you don’t have a college degree you’re far more likely to be unemployed."

16. [http://huff.to/cja9EW](http://huff.to/cja9EW) Huffpost - College Squeezing Out the Middle Class

"The cost of higher education is spiraling out of control. It is squeezing middle class families out and making America less competitive. We pride ourselves on the best higher education in the world, but we’re coasting on the reputation of three dozen selective institutions. Most students pay too much, get too little, and half drop out. For students being priced out of the market, there are a growing number of cheap or free alternatives and many are personal digital learning options."

17. [http://nyti.ms/cJmqjW](http://nyti.ms/cJmqjW) Note to Applicants: Admissions Officers Read What Your Teachers Say About You

"Most students want to know if the recommendations matter, if we even read them. At Connecticut College, we require two teacher recommendations, and yes, we read them. Whether or not they matter depends on the quality of the recommendation. A good recommendation — well written with strong praise for the student — will certainly help us make our decision. And, of course, we will take note if the writer has reservations about recommending the student. But if the recommendation is poorly written or clearly a form letter with the name of the student simply filling in a blank (you’d be surprised), we won’t include it in our review. In short, a good recommendation can help, but we don’t hold it against the applicant when we receive a poorly written one."

"States appropriated almost $6.2 billion for four-year colleges and universities between 2003 and 2008 to help pay for the education of students who did not return for year two, a report released Monday says. In addition, the federal government spent $1.5 billion and states spent $1.4 billion on grants for students who didn't start their sophomore years, according to "Finishing the First Lap: The Cost of First-Year Student Attrition in America's Four-Year Colleges and Universities."... The AIR report draws from Department of Education data, which Schneider concedes does not provide a full picture. The figures track whether new full-time students at 1,521 public and private colleges and universities return for year two at the same institution. It doesn't include part-timers, transfers or students who come back later and graduate."

19. [http://huff.to/aTXrb8](http://huff.to/aTXrb8) Huffpost - How to Survive and Have Fun on a College Tour With Your Kid This Fall

"But it wasn't the choice of restaurant that was making me so happy this particular Saturday night. It was that we'd survived a day of college touring in Boston without a meltdown, without stalking off a campus, without tears and with everyone still speaking -- and even more surprising, smiling. Anyone who has ever toured colleges with a high school student -- and I was on my third round that Boston weekend -- knows that's no small feat. I've driven four hours to have my son refuse to get out of the car because he didn't like the look of the campus; I've flown halfway across the country to have my daughter bail out before the tour because she didn't like the looks of the other prospective students ("too intense") and because the campus was "too flat." (What did she expect in Chicago anyway?). I've gotten the evil eye from a child when I've asked a question on a tour. (Parents are supposed to be seen and not heard in these situations, I quickly learned.)"

20. 'Some of the More Mundane Moments in Life Make Great Essays' - [http://nyti.ms/cNYc4d](http://nyti.ms/cNYc4d)

"For many seniors, choosing the topic for a personal statement is more difficult than actually writing the piece. But don’t fret. "Some of the more mundane moments in life make great essays," Christopher Burkmar, Princeton University’s associate dean of admissions, assured guidance counselors at a conference last month. For example, Mr. Burkmar said he had recently savored a few hundred words about a family’s dinner conversations. “The best essays make us laugh, cry or wince,” said Matthew Whelan, Stony Brook University’s assistant provost for admissions and financial aid. “They help us understand why we want the applicant here.”

21. How the For-Profit College Can Destroy Your Life [http://t.co/xA780pk](http://t.co/xA780pk)
“According to Frank Donoghue’s book, The Last Professors, fully one-third of American two- and four-year colleges were for-profit by 2003. The University of Phoenix alone currently enrolls over 440,000 students, making it the second-largest higher-education system in the country after SUNY. In 2008, when Donoghue’s book was published, the seven biggest public companies running these schools had a combined market cap of over $22 billion and enrolled nearly 700,000 students—nearly seven percent of all college students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities that year. Total for-profit enrollment had ballooned to over a million by the time of the GAO investigation.”

22. 10 Careers That Aren’t Going Away (Despite the Economy) http://bit.ly/dlnp3P via @AddToAny

"At the end of last year, U.S. News & World Report compiled a list of America’s best careers for 2010 based upon the Labor Department’s brand-new job growth projections for 2008 to 2018. Included in this list of 50 jobs are careers that offer the best opportunities for employment, earn above-average medium incomes and most importantly, are likely to stick around for a while even when some jobs will not. From plumbers to funeral directors, certain unexpected job areas have managed to flourish. While you may not envision directing funerals anywhere in your near future, Her Campus presents to you our top 10 picks for jobs that aren’t going anywhere anytime soon."

23. Your Comments on Admissions Essays - http://nyti.ms/d6gPHB

“Several of you wondered whether admissions officers can tell if an essay has been largely written by an adult (presumably a parent or independent consultant), or, at the least, extensively revised in a pass through a grown-up’s computer. I would suggest, having read dozens of essays alongside some admissions officers and interviewed many others, that they can often distinguish the voice of a young person from that of someone who, say, has put a few more miles on the odometer. Some admissions have read upwards of 1,000 essays a year over the course of several decades; they’re critical readers, and, as a gut-check, they might try to compare the writing sample in front of them to everything else they know about the applicant, such as his or her grades in English or what the student’s teachers say. Is it possible to put one over on them? Of course, but is that any way to start a college education?”


“I don’t know what I expected,” said Lang grad Garret Hurley, who received his B.A. in digital media last December but now, almost a year later, still waits tables. And he may be lucky. A new study by the Economic Policy Institute shows the unemployment rate for recent college graduates up from 5.4 percent in 2007 to 9 percent in 2009. Worse, according to the EPI, these statistics “do not indicate whether they are employed in a job that matches their skill level.” They estimate that grads working
outside their field will earn 30-35 percent less. According to Yale economist Lisa Khan, this is a big problem. Those who compromise early can’t shift into better jobs after the economy picks up. Her data suggest that a higher unemployment rate at graduation means lower income immediately after graduation and long afterward. Each 1 percent rise in unemployment will cost students 6-7 percent of their income the first year, and 2.5 percent fifteen years out."

25. The World Changed, Colleges Missed It [http://huff.to/bcbuvr](http://huff.to/bcbuvr) Huffpost

"Art Levine, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, sees three major change forces: new competition, a convergence of knowledge producers, and changing demographics. The explosion of online learning from new and existing providers is changing the landscape of higher education. More broadly, everybody is getting into the learning business and providing some kind of instruction: YouTube, iTunes U, the neighborhood library, and closet hackers like Kahn Academy. To make the landscape even more confusing, Levine points out that less than a fifth of higher ed students are traditional -- young adults that went straight to college from high school. The new majority in higher ed are working adults and they view college as just another part of their life. They want a relationship with college like the one with the bank or the electric company -- convenient, service on demand, quality support, and cheap."

26. Boomerang kids: 85% of college grads move home [http://t.co/r4s0RRz](http://t.co/r4s0RRz)

"Stubbornly high unemployment -- nearly 15% for those ages 20-24 -- has made finding a job nearly impossible. And without a job, there’s nowhere for these young adults to go but back to their old bedrooms, curfews and chore charts. Meet the boomerangers. "This recession has hit young adults particularly hard," according to Rich Morin, senior editor at the Pew Research Center in DC. So hard that a whopping 85% of college seniors planned to move back home with their parents after graduation last May, according to a poll by Twentysomething Inc., a marketing and research firm based in Philadelphia. That rate has steadily risen from 67% in 2006."

27. Trade schools flunk key test: Helping students [http://t.co/Ubp9Kq3](http://t.co/Ubp9Kq3)

"The default rate at for-profit schools is the highest, compared to other types of schools. It climbed to 11.6% in 2009, from 11% the year before, according to a study released Monday by the U.S. Department of Education. The rate is higher than the 6% for public schools and the 4% rate for private institutions. Tuition at for-profit schools runs significantly higher compared to public institutions, according to the Department of Education. The department said the average cost for a degree of less than two years is $11,480 at a for-profit compared to $2,451 at a public school. For programs longer than two years, the for-profit schools charge $12,026 compared to $7,077 for a four-year degree at a public school."
"First, Mr. Bousquet acknowledges the fundamental shortcomings of some for-profit universities: They fail to graduate students and the students they graduate are often un-, under- and mis-educated. The students go into debt to pay outrageous tuition for the attention of underqualified faculty, and then fail to find the employment for which they were putatively prepared. And from all of this underregulated misery and failure, the shareholders are racking up massive capital accumulation. He then goes on to make a similar argument about many of the nation’s nonprofit colleges and universities. “The problem is that the for-profits did not invent any of this,” he writes. “All of these tactics - what I’ve called the tuition gold rush - were pioneered by the nonprofit sector.”

"But here is what I do get angry about: It’s not possible for Sarah Lawrence to routinely raise its prices in a vacuum. College students who live hundreds or thousands of miles away could get hurt by the price increases at this liberal arts paradise in Bronxville, NY. Why? Because the higher-ed world is full of copy cats. When Sarah Lawrence, Bard College, Trinity College, Bates College and Ivy League institutions that rank among the most expensive schools raise their prices it causes reverberations among thousands of other schools. Schools lower on the academic pecking order judge themselves by what the country’s most prestigious and expensive schools are doing. If the elites continue to construct amazing facilities, shrink class sizes and maybe even offer maid service, the wannabes won’t want to be left behind. The wannabes know they can’t catch up to the college superstars, but they are terrified of losing ground. So they will raise their prices too."

"Apollo Group Inc., which runs the University of Phoenix, attributes its expected enrollment decline to changing practices aimed at satisfying new government regulations. Apollo will no longer pay its counselors bonuses based on how many students they enroll. It also will provide new students with a free three-week trial program to see if they are ready for school, weeding out those at risk of leaving school before earning degrees. Meanwhile, the industry is facing a proposed new rule from the Department of Education that could limit schools’ access to federal financial aid — the bulk of their revenue — if graduates’ debt levels are too high or too few students repay loans. And, many schools are close to maxing out how much revenue they can receive from federal financial aid resources. Federal regulations cap that amount at 90%. The industry averages 83%, largely because they focus on recruiting lower-income students who qualify for federal Pell Grants."
31. Don’t Wear One College’s Sweatshirt When Touring a Rival Campus, and Other Travel Tips - http://nyti.ms/brxK1X

"I wrote a book about applicants at Long Island’s Oyster Bay High, which recently started taking eighth-graders on college visits. Eighth grade? At first I sneered at that because too many students already see high school as little more than an express lane to the next stop. But the principal, Dennis O’Hara, assured me that these trips emphasize the possibilities of college rather than the name of a particular school. He’s found that this early exposure inspires kids to take their studies seriously. Escorting 100 teenagers around campuses, Mr. O’Hara has come up with several pointers that might help moms and dads touring with one child. He starts by drilling students on the basic rules of etiquette – no texting during an information session, for example. He tells them to ask questions, instead of relying on adults."

32. Students Unprepared for Community College Entrance Tests http://t.co/BO5TPdz via @educationweek

"A report looking at student experiences with assessment and course placement in California Community Colleges highlights the lack of testing awareness and gaps in the transition process. Mike Kirst, professor emeritus of education at Stanford University, was a chief consultant to the report, One Shot Deal, a two-year research study funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Walter S. Johnson Foundation. "Typically, community college students think they are ready for college because they passed their graduation exit exam from high school," says Kirst, which in California means having 6-8th grade math skills, 8-10th grade English proficiency, and passing with at least 55 percent. "They graduate with one set of standards and then face a whole different set of standards in the placement exams," he says."


"Mr. Yaruss is the founder of the Application Project Inc., which sells copies of successful applications to Ivy League colleges. Want to browse applications submitted by 21 members of Brown University’s 2009-10 freshman class? You can buy access to them for $19.99 on the company’s Web site, WeGotIn.net. For the same price, you can see applications filed by 14 members of the 2009-10 freshman class at Columbia University. Or you can buy both sets for $34.99. It’s all in the name of transparency, says Mr. Yaruss, who touts his new service a way to show students what successful applications look like—and what admissions officers look for when they evaluate them. Seeing how accepted applicants presented themselves, he says, can help high-school students, especially those who lack affluence, college savvy, and knowledgeable counselors. “It’s the one remaining part of the process that’s shrouded in mystery,” Mr. Yaruss says. “Students spend thousands of dollars preparing for the SAT. We’re offering this for the cost of a trade paperback."

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"The overall findings are based on an analysis of data for nearly 84,000 students following their first and second years of college. About a quarter of the students are athletes, and 18 percent are recruited athletes. In general, the report showed disparities between male and female athletes, between athletes and nonathletes, and between recruited and nonrecruited athletes. Female athletes had grade-point averages that were higher than male athletes, for instance, and male athletes who were recruited generally had lower grade-point averages than their nonathlete counterparts."

35. More youths with mental disabilities going to college [http://usat.me/40667136]

"In years past, college life was largely off-limits for students with such disabilities, but that's no longer the case. Students with Down syndrome, autism and other conditions that can result in intellectual disabilities are leaving high school more academically prepared than ever and ready for the next step: college. Eight years ago, disability advocates were able to find only four programs on university campuses that allowed students with intellectual disabilities to experience college life with extra help from mentors and tutors. As of last year, there were more than 250 spread across more than three dozen states and two Canadian provinces, said Debra Hart, head of Think College at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, which provides services to people with disabilities. That growth is partly because of an increasing demand for higher education for these students and there are new federal funds for such programs."

36. Middlebury Dean Says SAT or ACT is 'Seldom a Deal Breaker' - [http://nyti.ms/bhwqrV]

"It’s not that they play no role in the process, but highly selective colleges don’t usually have “cut off” scores for accepting or rejecting applicants, and most have a fairly wide range of scores represented among their admitted students. Higher scores are better than lower scores, of course, but even the highest scores are by no means a guarantee of admission. And sometimes a lower score can be at least partially offset by other factors in the application, like coming from an underrepresented background, having a special talent that is desirable in the student body, or any of the myriad other factors that come into play in the decision-making process. At most of the colleges to which you apply, your scores will probably look a lot like those of other applicants, so it’s unlikely they’ll be a deciding factor in your candidacy."

37. Proofread That Application, Unless You Want to be ‘Excepted’ - [http://nyti.ms/9lajET]

"Take a few minutes to proofread. Applications that are sent electronically don’t permit students to unseal the envelope and take one last look on the way to the post
office. Admissions offices see files littered with misspellings, grammatical mistakes and poor word choice. Students rely too much on programs that purport to check spelling and sentence structure."


"Since 1981, the list price tuition and fees charged by American four-year colleges and universities (public and private together) has risen at an annual rate of 7.1 percent. Room and board has gone up 5.3 percent per year. Overall inflation has averaged only 3.2 percent. These differences have fueled an increasingly acrimonious public debate over the causes and consequences of the rising cost of college attendance. At some risk of oversimplification, most of those who write on higher education start from the proposition that the causes of rising college cost are to be found by examining higher education with a fine-toothed comb. What they find isn’t pretty. They see dysfunctional universities in an increasingly dysfunctional higher education system. From there, the descent into apocalyptic rhetoric is easy. As a recent editorial in the Economist says, “America’s universities lost their way badly in the era of easy money. If they do not find it again, they may go the way of GM.”

39. State Financial Aid & Ohio Student Financial Literacy [http://www.ohiocan.org/RenderMedia.axd?i=po07Dluq0RXS4LHQu5cNriC99n1KNdWkIUY67ciFGDEujWlwuTGYOg--](http://www.ohiocan.org/RenderMedia.axd?i=po07Dluq0RXS4LHQu5cNriC99n1KNdWkIUY67ciFGDEujWlwuTGYOg--)

"According to the Ohio Board of Regents, the average tuition at Ohio public universities rose by 76 percent between 1993 and 2002. At the same time, the average Pell Grant and average Ohio Instructional Grant awards rose by 43 percent and 76 percent, respectively. However, at Ohio’s main university campuses, less than 50 percent of students on each campus receive state financial aid. At these campuses, 57 percent of students, on average, must still borrow federal funds. What is also important to keep in mind in terms of financial aid for students and families is that Ohio per capita income only rose by approximately 41 percent during while the average tuition rose almost twofold. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the most recent “Measuring Up” report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gave Ohio an “F” in affordability."


"Parents who have raised good kids should trust them. Because the essay is not an essential part of the process, and frankly, because most admissions officers know that they don’t know whose fingerprints are all over it, parental interference — except by people who really do know how to write — can be more demoralizing and divisive than useful. It’s hard to come up with good topics. Parents who haven’t had the benefit of reading thousands of essays don’t know the clichés of the genre and steer children away from anything that might be “risky,” though essays that deal with hard stuff — sex, drugs, religion, family strife — are often the most affecting. I can understand how difficult it is for parents not to be able to advise their children. But in this case,
my advice is to step back and let them express themselves. If you’ve done a good job, so will they."

41. 10 steps to take if you can't pay your student loan bills - http://b.globe.com/bM4Oon

"Boston-based nonprofit American Student Assistance offers these 10 things you should know about your student loan payments if you're unemployed - or barely getting by."

42. Educational Difficulties of Men & Immigrants Hinder Efforts to Improve College Attainment http://chronicle.com/article/Educational-Difficulties-of/125015/

"The overarching finding of this report is that the United States is no longer gaining ground in the educational attainment of its population from one generation to the next," Molly Corbett Broad, the council's president, said at a recent news conference to discuss the report's findings. "In general, each generation of younger women in the United States is continuing to reach higher levels of attainment, while that of younger men is falling," Ms. Broad said. Nearly all of the gains among women are being driven by those who are white or Asian-American, says the report, the 24th edition of "Minorities in Higher Education" issued by the council. The gains being made by black and Hispanic women are not nearly as large, and, on the whole, members of those two minority groups in the 25-to-34 age bracket have lower college attainment rates than they did a generation ago, according to the report, which can be purchased on the council's Web site."

43. 'Full Ride' Athletic Scholarships Sue Shellenbarger answers readers' Questions - http://on.wsj.com/bYng1i

"Less than 1% of all athletic scholarships are "full rides" covering all of a student's costs, including tuition, room and board, books and fees, says Dion Wheeler, a scout for the National Collegiate Scouting Association. The largest number of full scholarships go to Division I football players, where a coach is permitted a maximum of 85 scholarship athletes on the team. While coaches don't have to give full rides in football, "it is likely that if you get one, it will be a full ride," says Mr. Wheeler, author of a 2009 book on the topic, "The Sports Scholarship Insider's Guide." Smaller numbers of scholarship athletes are permitted in men's and women's basketball and ice hockey, and in women's gymnastics, tennis and volleyball, Mr. Wheeler says. In Division II sports and other Division I sports, such as track and field, scholarships may be split among any number of athletes; while full-ride awards can be given, they are usually reserved for top recruits coaches consider "must-haves," . . . ."

44. How to Tame College Costs—It's Not Just Tuition by Anna Prior WSJ http://on.wsj.com/anDUxh

"With all the added costs associated with the academic side of college, it can pay greatly to look for ways to cut back in different areas of college life. According to the
College Board, students at four-year universities spent an average of about $12,500 for the 2009-10 school year on things not related to tuition and fees. Here are five areas where you can cut college costs."

45. The 13 Most Expensive Colleges
www.huffingtonpost.com

"Earlier this year, Forbes named Sarah Lawrence College as the most expensive school in America, with tuition, room and board adding up to $57,556. But what are the most expensive schools in the country when you just look at tuition costs? Campus Grotto ranked 100 of them. See the top 13 most expensive colleges according to tuition prices below, and for the full list, check out Campus Grotto."


"In its annual “State of College Admission” report, which is being released Wednesday afternoon, the National Association for College Admission Counseling has tallied a fresh statistic that underscores the above point: The average acceptance rate at four-year colleges and universities was 67 percent for last fall’s freshmen class. For those families fixated on the nation’s most selective colleges — some of which accepted fewer than 10 percent of those who applied last year — such figures are probably of little comfort. But for others seeking to take a broader view, that 67 percent acceptance rate should be of some solace."


"During 2009, 47 percent of colleges reported an increase in the number of early decision applications they received, about the same proportion as the previous two years. But 65 percent of colleges with early decision reported admitting more students through the process in 2009, compared to only 43 percent reporting such increases the year before. And the gap is growing between the admissions rates for early decision and regular applicants at the same institutions. Colleges with early decision admit on average 55 percent of all applicants, but 70 percent of early decision applicants. In another data point on the return of early decision, in 2009 only 5 percent of colleges with the option reported admitting fewer applicants that way than they did the year before. In each of the previous three years, more than 30 percent of colleges reported such a shift."

48. Young Men Earn Fewer College Degrees: Report

"According to the American Council on Education’s analysis of 2008 data, 33 percent of men aged 25 to 34 hold postsecondary degrees, compared to 40 percent of men aged 55 to 64. Women, on the other hand, continue to exceed older generations in levels of higher education -- 42 percent of 25 to 34 year old females have a college degree,
as opposed to 34 percent of those aged 55 to 64. This pattern is consistent across ethnic groups, with the exception of Asian-Americans, for whom both younger men and women earn undergraduate degrees at higher rates than their older counterparts."

49. The Latest Scoop on College Admissions, by Lynn O'Shaughnessy
http://t.co/OEtFKI9

"The number of graduating high school students peaked at 3.3 million in 2009 while at the same time the recession made it more difficult for families to afford colleges. Higher-ed observers had predicted that students would limit their college choices and, sure enough, a significant minority of colleges have experienced that retrenchment. Twenty nine percent of colleges and universities said they experienced a drop in applications in 2009. That is the largest number of colleges to report fewer applications than at any time since 1996."

50. Early-Decision Programs May Lift Odds of College Admission, by Jacques Steinberg - http://nyti.ms/9RwQk3

"A report released Wednesday by an association of guidance counselors and admissions officers could be worth a look. It provides new evidence for those who believe that applying to college early in the academic year — or, more specifically, submitting applications under binding early-decision programs — increases the likelihood of acceptance. Nearly three of every four students who applied last year under such programs, which are offered by many of the nation’s most selective colleges, were accepted, compared with just over half who applied to the same colleges in the main application round, according to the annual report, "The State of College Admission," by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. All told, the percentage accepted last year in the early-decision round, in which those accepted are compelled to withdraw all other applications and enroll, was 15 points higher than in the main phase. And that gap is rising, the authors said. In fall 2006, 61 percent, on average, were accepted early, compared with 53 percent in the regular pool."

51. The Economy and College Admissions, by Beckie Supiano

"During the 2009 cycle, the number of students graduating from high school in the United States reached a peak of 3.33 million; the number of high-school graduates is projected to decline through 2014-15. In recent years, many colleges have seen their application numbers increase as more students graduated from high school and as students applied to more colleges. This year, 65 percent of colleges reported an increase in the number of applications received. But despite the peak number of high-school graduates, 29 percent of colleges reported a drop in the number of applications they received, the highest share reporting a decline since 1996. That finding, the report’s authors suggest, could be the result of changed student behavior
because of the recession. In a survey the association conducted last year, many counselors reported that more students were considering two-year colleges or were looking at public colleges rather than private ones because of cost considerations."

52. Student Debt and the Class of 2009  

"College seniors who graduated in 2009 had an average of $24,000 in student loan debt, up 6 percent from the previous year, according to data released Thursday by the Project on Student Debt. At the same time, unemployment for recent college graduates climbed from 5.8 percent in 2008 to 8.7 percent in 2009 - the highest annual rate on record for college graduates aged 20 to 24."

53. Somewhere Along the Line - Inside Higher Ed  
[http://t.co/8kzMErN](http://t.co/8kzMErN)

"A greater share of students who began at higher levels of remediation -- in other words, those levels closest to “college-ready” -- were “of traditional college age when they entered community college,” and they “aspired to more ambitious academic goals,” “enrolled full time during their first year,” “completed college-level coursework beyond the [remediation] sequence,” and “transferred or completed a degree or certificate.” At the other end of the spectrum, few students who began at the lower levels of remediation “completed the last course in the remedial sequence or beyond.” Black and Hispanic students “were overrepresented” in these lower levels."

54. Average Student Debt: $24,000  

"The report reveals that northeastern states have the highest concentration of debt, with averages across states ranging from $13,000 to $30,000. The report looked at graduates of private and public non-profit four-year colleges. Institute for College Access & Success President Lauren Asher told the New York Times that the “consistent growth in debt over the last few years really adds up.” She said students should consider federal loans over private loans as they come with more repayment options and borrower protections."

55. New Measurements For Success At Community Colleges?  

"Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System currently publishes degree attainment for first-and full-time students who graduate within four years. Those who support a new means of measurement argue that the IPEDS falsely deflates the success of two year institutions by failing to report on students who transfer to a four year college before graduating, as well as on students who never intend to gain a
degree (i.e. individuals who seek a certificate or retraining). The study found that 50 percent of students who passed English classes within their first two years graduated, compared with only 20 percent of students who failed such courses, and that 55 percent of students who passed math classes in their first two years attained a degree -- as opposed to a graduation rate of 21 percent for those who did not earn passing marks. The report’s authors contend that such figures should encourage states to make a nuanced effort to increase graduation rates. . . ."

56. Students Applying to More Colleges and More Online, by Caralee Adams - [http://t.co/myyrqTw via @educationweek](http://t.co/myyrqTw via @educationweek)

"The 2010 State of College Admission Report shows that nearly 75 percent of students now apply to three or more colleges, an increase of 14 percent in the past two decades. The percentage of students who submitted seven or more applications reached 23 percent last year, up from 9 percent in 1990. Although most colleges reported increases in the number of applications for fall 2009, the largest proportion since 1996 (29 percent) reported decreases. The process is becoming electronic. About 80 percent of four-year colleges and universities received applications online for the fall 2009 admission cycle, up from 72 percent in 2008, 68 percent in 2007, and 58 percent in 2006."


"Lauren Asher, president of the Institute for College Access & Success, the research and advocacy group that operates the debt project, provided a piece of advice worth passing on to readers of The Choice: “If you’re going to borrow, you should take out federal loans first, because federal student loans come with far more repayment options and borrower protections than other types of loans.”


"Young college educated workers, particularly those 25 and under, however, have not fared very well over the past three years. They have experienced rising joblessness, underemployment, and malemployment problems (i.e., working in jobs that do not require a college degree). During the January-August period of 2010, we estimate that fewer than 50 of every 100 young B.A.-holders held a job requiring a college degree. The labor market difficulties of many young bachelor degree holders in the U.S. can best be seen in the types of jobs in which they were employed in the first eight months of the current calendar year. Of the 20 individual occupations employing the largest number of young, college graduates (25 and under), seven typically did not require any type of college degree to be employed. There were 175,000 young college graduates working as cashiers, retail clerks, and customer service representatives versus only 146,000 employed in all computer professional professions. . . ."
59. School Counselors Stretched at a Time When Needed Most, by Caralee Adams - http://t.co/rrX5uoM

"Although the American School Counselor Association recommends a 250-to-1 ratio of students to school counselors, the national average is actually 457 (2008-09 school year). Click here to see how the individual states stacks up. The reason for the gap in the association's recommendations and reality? A combination of financially strapped schools and lack of mandates for counselors, says Jill Cook, assistant director at ASCA. "They are not as a big of a priority," she says. "When the budget gets tight, that's where the cuts are made. "Proper staffing is even more important today as the job of the school counselor has expanded to serve all students, says Cook. Rather just helping those with discipline problems or those headed to college, as was the case 20 years ago, counselors today are expected to work with all students on academic, career, and social issues. The options are now more varied, too, helping students with the transition to community college, four-year institutions, or work...."

60. Advice for the College Interview: Girls, Dress Discreetly; Boys, Mind Those Hands, by Dave Marcus - http://nyti.ms/a5CA1N

“I’m surprised at the number of students who can’t easily articulate why they drove six hours to visit our campus,” David Kogler of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn. “Was it our reputation? Did you like our mail? Grandma told you about us? You’re on your way to our chief competitor?”

Any of those would at least start a dialogue, he says. When I do alumni interviews for Brown University, I look for a critical thinker, someone who has insatiable curiosity about everything from literature to science. Recently I started asking applicants to name their representative in Congress. I get quite a few dull stares. Same when I suggest that students discuss an article they’ve read in the past two days in a newspaper or magazine, in print or online. Oh, well. My questions rarely matter. Applicants don’t seem to realize that relatively brief alumni interviews hardly ever make or break a candidate’s case."


"One of my greatest concerns about the way most students make their college financing decisions -- and one of the key reasons I wrote Debt-Free U: How I Paid For An Outstanding College Education Without Loans, Scholarships, Or Mooching Off My Parents -- is this: Very, very few borrowers fully understand the potential ramifications of the loans that they are taking out. No effort is made to educate borrowers and while all borrowers do have to sign promissory notes; the disclosures are hopelessly inadequate. To help, I have put together my own disclosure document that I believe every single prospective college student should be required to read and sign before borrowing a dime to pay for college. I’m highly confident that Sallie Mae and financial aid offices around the country will adopt this disclosure statement immediately:"
62. Banks spend big to sell credit cards to students, by Amy Haimeri
money.cnn.com/2010/10/26/pf/...

"In total, the report showed that credit card companies spent $82.4 million to net 53,164 new student accounts. The University of Notre Dame got the biggest payment of any school: Chase paid the school $1.8 million and in the end got 77 new borrowers. The school used the funds exclusively for financial aid, according to university spokesman Dennis Brown. Meanwhile, Bank of America spent $1.5 million on the University of Southern California campus to sell 659 new accounts."

63. Are the Ivies Worth The Price? by Sue Shellenbarger Choosing a College Unigo
unigo.com/articles/are_t...

"Old dreams of adult children earning degrees from elite, door-opening colleges or “legacy” schools attended by relatives are falling away in some families, in favor of a new pragmatism. Other parents and students are doing a tougher cost-benefit analysis of the true value of a pricey undergraduate degree. As parents wrestle privately with such emotional issues, many say they wish they’d begun years earlier to assess their values and priorities, long before their children’s college-decision deadline was upon them."

64. NCAA football grad rates at all-time high, but top ...

"The rate for black players, a longtime concern, jumped five points to 61% of those who entered school in 2003, the association's latest study showed. But the annual academic scorecard was less flattering to many of the sport's top-tier programs. Seven of the top 10 — including No. 1 Auburn, No. 2 Oregon and No. 3 Boise State — and 16 of the top 25 in the current Bowl Championship Series standings fell beneath the sport's four-year average. Oklahoma and Arizona graduated fewer than half of their players. The numbers also were low in the other marquee college sport, men's basketball, where three of last season's eight NCAA regional finalists and more than one in five programs overall had four-year rates beneath 50%. Those multi-year averages count players who arrived on campus from 2000-2003, giving them six years to earn degrees."

65. Irish Athletes Again Rank Number One In 2010 NCAA GSR Comparisons
http://www.und.com/genrel/102710aaa.html

"University of Notre Dame athletic programs again rank among the best in the country in graduation rates, based on Graduation Success Rate (GSR) figures released today by the NCAA - including first-place ratings in the sports of football, men's basketball and women's basketball, and a close second in ice hockey. Among the 120 Football Bowl Subdivision institutions, Notre Dame had the highest percentage of its sports with 100 percent scores (for the fifth time in six years), with a .863 figure (19 of 22). In
football, Notre Dame achieved a 96 GSR rating for the highest figure among FBS schools.


"For the school year 2010-11, in-state tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and universities rose to $7,605, up 7.9% from a year ago, the College Board reported Thursday. At private four-year institutions, the average cost rose 4.5% to $27,293.31. Dwindling state budgets are sparking the hikes at public colleges. Over the past decade, public school tuition has risen at an annual rate of 5.6% vs. 3% at private schools. "Prices are continuing to rise more rapidly than the rate of inflation, particularly in the public sector," said Sandy Baum, independent policy analyst at the College Board. "Public colleges and universities are getting less money from the states because the states just don't have money to give them."


"If there is “good news 2010 “Trends in College Pricing” and “Trends in Student Aid” reports,” Ms. Lewin writes, it is “that fast-rising tuition costs have been accompanied by a huge increase in financial aid, which helped keep down the actual amount students and families pay.” Ms. Lewin quotes Sandy Baum, the economist who is the lead author of the reports, as saying that in 2009-2010, students received $28 billion in Pell grants, “and that’s $10 billion more than the year before.” In fact, Ms. Lewin says, growth in student aid from the government this year “was so large that unlike former years, government grants surpassed institutional grants.”


"For room and board, public increases also outpaced the privates, and privates are also more expensive. The average public college rate is going up by 4.6 percent, to $8,535, and the average private rate is going up by 3.9 percent, to $9,700. Those figures are for four-year institutions only, as the pool of community colleges and for-profit colleges charging for room and board remains small. As is the case every year, College Board officials stress that the data show that most colleges -- however much their prices frustrate students and families -- are not in the mid-$50,000 range that attracts so much attention. Total expenses for a private four-year institution are, on average, just under $37,000 a year. But because the most famous private institutions tend to be well above that average, many people assume tuition rates are even higher than they are."

69. NCPA Scholarship Shortfall Search: NCAA Forces College Athletes to Pay http://www.ncpanow.org/research?id=0018
"A study conducted by the NCPA and the Ithaca College Graduate Program in Sport Management reveals that NCAA rules force players to pay for thousands in educational-related expenses. Scholarship shortfalls are different from one college to the next so it is important for recruits to consider how much they are expected to pay at each school. The range of out-of-pocket expenses for a “full” scholarship student-athlete is $200/year to $10,962/year depending on the college. …NCAA rules prevent all of its colleges from providing athletic scholarships that fully cover the price tag of the school better known as the cost of attendance. That leaves players on “full” scholarship with significant out-of-pocket expenses for education-related expenses such as various academic supplies and fees. This joint study revealed that, in 2009, student-athletes in Division I receiving a so-called “full” scholarship were left with an average scholarship shortfall of $2951/year, or $14,755 over five years. The NCAA formula for scholarships leaves very different shortfalls from one college to the next. The range in scholarship shortfalls is $200/year - $10,962/year. A full scholarship athlete at the University of Arkansas (Little Rock) would be expected to pay almost $55,000 over five years."

70. Fall College Tuition Costs Climbing Again, by Eric Gorski

"When adjusted for inflation, the tuition increases this fall amount to 6.6 percent at public four-year colleges and 3.2 percent at private ones, according to the College Board. Many students are finding relief in expanded federal aid, including tax credits, veterans' benefits and a record expansion of the Pell Grant program for low-income students. In 2009-10, 7.7 million students received $28.2 billion in Pell Grants - an increase of almost $10 billion from the year before, according to a companion College Board report, "Trends in Student Aid. "Even so, the maximum Pell grant covers just 34 percent of the average cost of attending a public four-year college, down from 45 percent two decades ago."

71. Tuition Over Time, 1999-2010 - Find An Institution
http://chronicle.com/article/Interactive-Tool-Tuition-Over/125043/

"The published price of college continued to climb in 2010-11, according to "Trends in College Pricing 2010," the newest installment in a series of annual reports issued by the College Board. To explore tuition trends at a particular college or university, start by choosing an institution type and a state, and then select an institution. You will then be able to compare its tuition and fees with those at other institutions, stretching back to 1999."


"Bishop pointed to economic data showing that, since 1985, the cost of attending a private college has risen at more than double the rate of household income. Put another way, the share of a median household’s income that was devoted to paying
for higher education went from 22 percent in 1988 to more than 50 percent today. Those increases continue, with tuition and fee hikes this year ranging from 4.5 percent to nearly 8 percent over last year. “Families are more stressed than they ever have been before,” said Bishop. “As I look out over the next 10 years, I’m deeply concerned,” said Rick Bischoff, vice president for enrollment at Case Western Reserve University. “Would it be better to have a smaller percentage of high-need students and not ‘gap’ them?” he asked, referring to the practice of admitting some applicants without offering them sizable enough aid packages to realistically make it possible for them to enroll.

“That’s because only a small subset of colleges pledges to meet the full need of all students they admit. That means that for most institutions, “gapping” has become the norm. That’s when a college admits a student, tells her that she probably needs $X to afford to enroll, and then provides a package that is less than $X -- sometimes considerably so. On need-blind status, the study found that 93 percent of public institutions and 81 percent of private institutions say that they are entirely need blind. An additional 6 percent of private colleges report that they are need blind until May 1, and then consider economic circumstances when evaluating students on the waiting list or who apply late. But the numbers change dramatically when colleges are asked if they meet the full financial need of accepted students. Only 32 percent of public institutions and 18 percent of private institutions say that they make such a commitment, the report says.”

73. Top 10 benefits of a college degree, by Elizabeth Fuller - csmonitor.com/Business/2010/

Please, read this list!


"Faced with mounting criticism, two of the largest for-profit colleges have announced reforms. Starting in September the 470,000-student-strong University of Phoenix stopped paying its admissions officers based on the number of students they sign up, eliminating an incentive some see for those officers to mislead applicants or pressure them to sign paperwork. The school will also put all prospective new students through a three-week, tuition-free “orientation” course designed to help them decide whether they’re ready for the commitments that come with their studies. In the past there have been reports of cash-strapped students talked into signing up when they may not have been ready—many may be behind financially or educationally, but they still end up on the hook for making school payments they can’t really afford. “The orientation program enables incoming students to make an informed decision about attending University of Phoenix and experience the rigors of the college classroom. . . ."

75. College Tuition: What Students Are Paying Today, by Lynn O'Shaughnessy - moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/b...
"Bottom Line: If you are evaluating colleges, price tags are meaningless. It’s important to find out kind of price cuts individual colleges will offer your child. You’re more apt to find these schools if you cast a wider net. There are tons of price discounts out there and the best way for a child to snag them is to do well at school and take challenging courses. Grade point averages and the strength of a teen’s academic record are typically what colleges care about the most. In the meantime, if you want to see what college costs have been doing at individual schools, I’d suggest that you take a look at this nifty college cost tool from The Chronicle of Higher Education that shows the yearly tuition and fees for more than 3,300 individual colleges and universities since 1999."

76. For-Profit Colleges to Get New Federal Rules, by Tamar Lewin - http://nyti.ms/aAo6XN

"The final regulations on these for-profit colleges cover 13 of the 14 program-integrity questions the department has plans to address. The one that remains is the “gainful employment” regulation that would cut off federal student aid to programs whose graduates borrow too much and earn too little to repay their debts. The department will hold hearings next week on the topic, and will meet with interested parties to discuss that regulation, which will be finalized next year, and go into effect in 2012."


"At the College Board’s annual conference here, several admissions officers at “test-optional” colleges have shared some answers. Melissa Falk, associate dean of admission and financial aid at Muhlenberg College, said reading the files of a non-submitter requires more time than reading the files of other applicants. That’s because Muhlenberg requires applicants who don’t send their scores to submit a copy of a graded paper, and to participate in an interview, either in person or by telephone. “It adds another level of subjectivity,” Ms. Falk said. Typically, colleges that go test-optional must do a lot of explaining, to faculty members, alumni, high-school counselors, prospective applicants, and—last, but not least—campus tour guides. The message? “This doesn’t mean standards are diminished,” Ms. Falk said."


"But to do so we would eventually have to find an alternative to our current byzantine and often life-crushing financial-aid system, so largely dependent on borrowed money. The easy availability of student loans is, I believe, setting the stage for a meltdown similar to the subprime mortgage crisis, as waves of students will graduate unable to pay their debt."

"Upon graduation, students at these highly selective institutions will find that firms that recruit talented people would rather search in 20 places, which have already sorted people on the basis of talent, than in 200. Being at one of those 20 places puts a person in the field of vision of those who are looking for talent. Because of these opportunities in college and beyond, the scarcest resource an elite college manages is a place in the entering class."

80. Graduate School Matters More, by David W. Breneman - Room for Debate - http://nyti.ms/eFu1DZ

"Performing at a high level in a good quality but not highly prestigious college may give a student a better chance of getting into graduate or professional school than being lost in the middle of the pack in a highly selective institution. The quality of graduate or professional school will matter more in the long run to a student's success in life than the ranking of the undergraduate college."

81. Skip the Admissions Game, by Kevin Carey - Room for Debate - http://nyti.ms/fztWiP

"The only way we know how to rate college quality in this country is by wealth, fame, and exclusivity. But most students -- about four out of five -- attend colleges that have modest resources, are easy to get into, and are relatively obscure. Lacking any other way to distinguish among these choices, these students usually attend whichever college is cheapest and closest to home."

82. Merit and Race, by Luis Fuentes-Rohwer - Room for Debate - http://nyti.ms/hoL7WR

"This point raises the question of who is a racial minority worthy of special consideration. For example, fewer and fewer historically disadvantaged African-American students are being admitted to elite colleges. Increasingly, elite colleges are admitting biracial students and first- or second-generation black students from the Caribbean and from Africa. Historically disadvantaged African-American students are being left behind in the elite college lottery. This is a tragedy. This also underscores the remaining importance of our historically black colleges and universities.
The question is similarly complicated with respect to Latino applicants. For example, should Cuban Americans with on average higher socioeconomic status be treated the same as Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans? How about recent migrants from Central and South America?"

"Our dilemma is that, although selective institutions produce excellence, they are also reproducing inequality. The elite colleges are increasingly white and affluent. The least selective four-year colleges and community colleges are increasingly home to disproportionate concentrations of low-income students as well as African-American and Hispanic youth. And less than 5 percent of students at elite colleges come from the bottom quartile of family income."

84. Yes, College Choice Makes a Difference, by Richard D. Kahlenberg - Room for Debate - http://nyti.ms/iag5Ki

"While people might assume that it is harder to get through an academically rigorous college, in fact a student is more likely to graduate from a selective institution than a less selective one, controlling for initial ability. For example, Anthony Carnevale and Jeff Strohl’s Century Foundation study found that among students scoring between 1200 and 1300 on the SAT, 96 percent graduate from the most selective colleges, compared with 78 percent at the least selective."


"The key to success in college and beyond has more to do with what students do with their time during college than where they choose to attend. A long-term study of 6,335 college graduates published by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that graduating from a college where entering students have higher SAT scores -- one marker of elite colleges -- didn't pay off in higher post-graduation income. Researchers found that students who applied to several elite schools but didn't attend them -- either because of rejection or by their own choice -- are more likely to earn high incomes later than students who actually attended elite schools."


"The article also referred imprecisely to the significance of the number of black men in college. While black men made up “just 5 percent” of college students in 2008, that figure did not represent one of the areas in which blacks showed a lack of achievement, given that black men make up only about 6.5 percent of the general population."

87. This Raging Fire, by Bob Herbert - http://nyti.ms/9Jjsc2

"We know by now, of course, that the situation is grave. We know that more than a third of black children live in poverty; that more than 70 percent are born to unwed mothers; that by the time they reach their mid-30s, a majority of black men without a high school diploma has spent time in prison. We know all this, but no one seems to
know how to turn things around. No one has been able to stop this steady plunge of young black Americans into a socioeconomic abyss.

Now comes a report from the Council of the Great City Schools that ought to grab the attention of anyone who cares about black youngsters, starting with those parents who have shortchanged their children on a scale so monstrous that it is difficult to fully grasp. The report, titled “Call for Change,” begins by saying that “the nation’s young black males are in a state of crisis” and describes their condition as “a national catastrophe.” It tells us that black males remain far behind their schoolmates in academic achievement and that they drop out of school at nearly twice the rate of whites. Black children — boys and girls — are three times more likely to live in single-parent households than white children and twice as likely to live in a home where no parent has full-time or year-round employment. In 2008, black males were imprisoned at a rate six-and-a-half times higher than white males."

88. 12th Grade NAEP Scores Are Meaningless, by Diane Ravitch - http://t.co/jyZjs3X via @educationweek

"The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which oversees NAEP, has known for years that 12th graders don't try to do well on the tests. The students know that the tests don't count, that there are no individual scores, that no one will ever know if they did well or poorly, and they are not motivated to do their best."

89. School Demographics Can Add to Social Cost of Achievement, by Sarah D. Sparks - http://t.co/f1eSdef via @educationweek

"The authors found black and Native American adolescents each had significantly higher social costs associated with academic success than did white students, and the social cost was greatest for students who were part of a racial minority in a high-achieving school. Interestingly, this occurred whether or not white students or another racial group made up the majority of the students. "The main interpretation is these schools are likely to create a more competitive environment, and any competitive environment will increase tensions between groups," Fuller-Rowell said. Moreover, in a highly competitive school, "it's difficult to achieve highly without engaging in behaviors that are visible to peers" such as speaking out in class or participating in clubs, he said."


"The median debt of for-profit college graduates -- $31,190 -- far outpaces that of private non-profit college graduates, which stands at $17,040, and is more than triple the median debt for those from public colleges, which is $7,960. The University of Phoenix had one of the lower graduation rates at five percent, though the school said in a statement that when all of its students are accounted for -- not just those in federal data -- its graduation rate for bachelor's degree seekers rises to 36 percent."

"It is an online device called the “net price calculator,” and colleges and universities will be required by the federal government to have their own versions on their Web sites beginning late next year. The expectation is that families considering a particular institution will be able to enter basic information — household income, savings, mortgage, number of other family members in college — and a program will respond with estimated costs for that college."

92. **Rise in College Applications Raises Concerns About Access, by Caralee Adams** - [http://t.co/2C5IHhX](http://t.co/2C5IHhX) via @educationweek

"With the rise in applications for admission, more colleges are rejecting more students and becoming more selective. The report suggests this could close doors of opportunity for more low-income, first-generation students in all sectors, as these students typically are less certain of their academic goals, received less rigorous college preparation, and have more difficulty negotiating the college bureaucracies. Applying to more schools only to be rejected by more institutions also makes the application process more costly for students and schools, the report notes. While applying to more schools may give students more options for the best fit or the best financial aid package, the report shows growing evidence that financial aid investments are outstripping investments in teaching and learning in the classroom, ultimately canceling out the students' advantage."


"The list price is the tuition published in the catalog, and frequently this list price bears little relationship to the price that the student’s family actually pays. Much of this charge is covered by grants of some kind: private scholarships, and tuition discounts offered by the schools themselves. The net tuition is the price paid after all discounts. DGA explained this very well. Alarm over rising list price is misplaced angst. In addition, much of the “crisis” people perceive is driven by stories of astronomical tuition at elite private schools. But fewer than 10 percent of the students enrolled at four-year universities attend schools whose list-price tuition and fees exceed $33,000. Over 47 percent attend schools whose published tuition and fees total less than $9,000 per year."

"Undergraduate college student borrowing has risen dramatically in recent years. Graduates who received a bachelor’s degree in 2008 borrowed 50% more (in inflation-adjusted dollars) than their counterparts who graduated in 1996, while graduates who earned an associate’s degree or undergraduate certificate in 2008 borrowed more than twice what their counterparts in 1996 had borrowed.

96. Report Finds Low Graduation Rates at For-Profit Colleges, by Tamar Lewin - http://nyti.ms/fqGCuv

"A new report on graduation rates at for-profit colleges by a nonprofit research and advocacy group charges that such colleges deliver “little more than crippling debt,” citing federal data that suggests only 9 percent of the first-time, full-time bachelor’s degree students at the University of Phoenix, . . . ."

97. Online Enrollment Increases at Highest Rate Ever http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/enrollment-in-online-courses-increases-at-the-highest-rate-ever/28204

"In fall 2009, colleges—including public, nonprofit private, and for-profit private institutions—reported that one million more students were enrolled in at least one Web-based course, bringing the total number of online students to 5.6 million. That unexpected increase—which topped the previous year’s 17-percent rise—may have been helped by higher demand for education in a rocky economy and an uptick in the number of colleges adopting online courses. Although the survey found sustained interest in online courses across all sectors, there was a spike in the number of for-profit institutions—a 20-percent increase over last year—that said online education is critical to their long-term strategies. However, more public colleges than private for-profits—74.9 percent versus 60.5 percent—say it’s part of their long-term plans."

98. Educate black men now, or we’ll all pay later, by DeWayne Wickham http://usat.ly/9Q00JS - RT @USATODAY

"Black males continue to perform lower than their peers throughout the country on almost every indicator,” the Washington-based Council of the Great Schools, which represents the nation’s 66 largest urban public school systems, said in a recent report. While much of the news coverage of the council’s gut-wrenching report has focused on the failure of nearly all fourth- and eighth-grade black males to read and do math at proficiency levels, less attention has been paid to its conclusion that educational improvements alone won’t fix this problem. What’s needed, the council said, is a “concerted national effort to improve the education, social and employment outcomes of African-American males. "If you think that's just a warmed-over pitch for more funding of a liberal agenda, you're being shortsighted. In 13 years, minorities will be a majority of this nation's children younger than 18. In just 29 years, most working-age Americans will be black, Hispanic, Asian or Native American."
99. Gregory Kane: Nobody wants to talk about black America's gender crisis

"Now that the problem has been defined, we can talk about the particulars. Anybody notice the gender question? We're not talking about black girls underachieving, or black girls having a crisis when it comes to education. We're talking about black boys. That means the girls are achieving, and the boys aren't. That means black America's old, reliable whipping boy -- white racism -- might not be solely to blame for this crisis. And a crisis it is. What we have here is a failure to communicate about the Great African-American gender crisis. (My apologies to Donn Pearce and Frank Pierson, the screenwriters for the film "Cool Hand Luke"). It's our nasty little secret, the dirty laundry we don't want washed in public. If, indeed, white racism, specifically institutional white racism, were the cause of black academic underachievement, we would expect it to affect black girls and black boys in equal, or near equal, measure."

100. China Surges Past India as Top Home of Foreign Students, by Tamar Lewin - http://nyti.ms/cZL6l9

"The report found that a record high of 690,923 international students came to the United States last year — nearly 128,000 of them, or more than 18 percent, from China. Over all, the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States increased 3 percent for the 2009-10 academic year. India, which in recent years had been in the top spot, increased its numbers only slightly, to 104,897 last academic year. “The number of students from China is booming, because of that booming Chinese economy,” said Peggy Blumenthal, executive vice president of the institute. “But India, which also has a booming economy, is only up 1.6 percent. I think one factor is the great number of Chinese families with disposable income, two working parents and only one child, and a determination to invest their money to make sure that child receives the best education possible.”

101. 'The Washington Post' and the Perils of For-Profit Colleges, by Stephen Burd
http://chronicle.com/article/The-Washington-Post/the/125270/

"It's hardly a secret that the Washington Post Company owns Kaplan Inc., one of the largest for-profit-college chains in the country. Kaplan, in fact, accounts for 62 percent of the parent company's total revenue. Late last week the Post reported that overall revenue from its Kaplan division rose to $743-million, up 9 percent over the same period last year. Recognizing the outsize role that Kaplan plays in keeping the newspaper afloat, Donald E. Graham, the company's chairman and chief executive, declared in 2007 that the Washington Post Company was now "an education and media company." Less widely known are the Post's ties to Corinthian Colleges, a for-profit higher-education company that serves about 110,000 students at more than 100 colleges in the United States and Canada. The newspaper company purchased nearly seven million shares of Corinthian Colleges' stock in 2008, giving it an 8-percent ownership stake in a company that appears to be among those most in jeopardy. . . ."
102. Executives Collect $2 Billion at For-Profit Colleges
http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=washingtonstory&sid=am_MEK7XWQr0

“Strayer Education Inc., a chain of for-profit colleges that receives three-quarters of its revenue from U.S. taxpayers, paid Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Robert Silberman $41.9 million last year. That’s 26 times the compensation of the highest-paid president of a traditional university. Top executives at the 15 U.S. publicly traded for-profit colleges, led by Apollo Group Inc. and Education Management Corp., also received $2 billion during the last seven years from the proceeds of selling company stock, Securities and Exchange Commission filings show. At the same time, the industry registered the worst loan-default and four-year-college dropout rates in U.S. higher education. Since 2003, nine for-profit college insiders sold more than $45 million of stock apiece. Peter Sperling, vice chairman of Apollo’s University of Phoenix, the largest for-profit college, collected $574.3 million. Education corporations, which receive as much as 90 percent of their revenue from federal financial-aid programs, are “private enterprise that’s almost entirely publicly funded,” Henry Levin, director of Columbia University’s National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, said in a telephone interview.”

103. Black Male Achievement in a 'State of Crisis,' Study Says, by Dakarai Aarons -
http://t.co/1wmZtp2 via @educationweek

"As a study this summer by the Schott Foundation for Public Education pointed out, fewer than half of black males graduate from high school on time. "At almost every juncture, the odds are stacked against these young men in ways that result in too much unfulfilled potential and too many fractured lives," writes Michael Casserly, the council’s executive director. The council’s report suggests that the underperformance of black male youths is nothing short of a national emergency, and it calls for the convening of a White House conference."The previous efforts to ring the alarm bell have too often fallen on deaf ears, and we thought that a White House conference would help both raise the visibility of the issues and aide in attempting to martial the public will to tackle it,” Casserly said in an interview.”

104. Proficiency of Black Students is Found to Be Far Lower Than Expected, by
Trip Gabriel

“What this clearly shows is that black males who are not eligible for free and reduced-price lunch are doing no better than white males who are poor,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the council. The report shows that black boys on average fall behind from their earliest years. Black mothers have a higher infant mortality rate and black children are twice as likely as whites to live in a home where no parent has a job. In high school, African-American boys drop out at nearly twice the rate of white boys, and their SAT scores are on average 104 points lower. In college, black men represented just 5 percent of students in 2008.”

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"They accept any student who applies, selling themselves as a more convenient education with more flexible scheduling than traditional competitors. These schools now enroll 1.8 million students—a near-sixfold burst from just several years ago. The industry's leader, University of Phoenix, rivals the enrollment size of the State University of New York and has enough students (about 443,000) to make it one of the largest higher-education systems in the country. On one hand, this growth is good news for students: more options make it easier to find the massage-therapy certification that the local community college didn't offer or to take courses online instead of commuting to a classroom. But the profit motive can be a nasty thing: investigative reporters and government inspectors have caught for-profit colleges using all sorts of underhanded tactics that hit students in the pocketbook, from overcharging for classes to pushing applicants toward unnecessary education loans. . . ."

"Many might be surprised that underrepresented minorities aspire to earn STEM degrees at roughly the same rate as other groups. However, only about 20 percent of underrepresented minority students complete undergraduate STEM programs within five years. And while white and Asian American students are more successful, their completion rates are also troubling, with only 33 and 42 percent of those students, respectively, finishing STEM degrees in five years. The country is struggling to remain globally competitive in science and technology. Retaining and graduating undergraduates of all races in STEM fields is clearly an American issue."

"According to NSF statistics cited in the AAUW report, despite the fact that women make up the majority of college students generally, only 88,371 of them graduated in STEM fields in 2007, compared to 138,874 of their male counterparts. In 2007, men outnumbered women in science and engineering careers, 73 percent to 27 percent. Gender biases -- conscious and unconscious -- often hinder women's progress in these fields, the report says."

"I knew that most of my students who walked across the stage, amidst the cheers, whistles, camera flashes, and shout-outs from parents, family, and friends, were not functionally literate. They were unable to perform the minimum skills necessary to negotiate society: reading the local newspapers, filling out a job application, or following basic written instructions; even fewer had achieved empowering literacy enabling them to closely read, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate text. However, they
were all college bound — the ultimate goal of our school’s vision statement —
clutching knapsacks stuffed with our symbols of academic success: multiple college
acceptances, a high school diploma; an official transcript indicating they had passed
the MCAS test and had met all graduation requirements; several glowing letters of
recommendation from teachers and guidance counselors; and one compelling personal
statement, their college essay.”

109. The Real Price of College: Looking Beyond the Sticker

“Over the decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11, average published tuition and fees at
public four-year colleges rose 72% after adjusting for inflation. The 35% increase at
private four-year colleges and the 31% increase at public two-year colleges seem
moderate by comparison. But after subtracting estimated average grant aid and
federal tax credits and deductions received by full-time students, the net price
actually declined in each of these three postsecondary sectors. In other words, on
average the net tuition and fees students are paying are lower in 2010 dollars than
they were a decade ago. So it’s not surprising that there are two very different stories
out there about the price of college and college affordability. Why is it so hard for
people to believe the numbers about declining net prices?”

110. Veterans who go back to school want more support, by Jenna Johnson -
http://t.co/XTPoF14

“Researchers with the National Survey of Student Engagement interviewed nearly
11,000 student veterans who were first-year students or seniors at four-year schools.
The veterans reported interacting less with their instructors than did classmates who
had not enlisted, and they were less likely to partake in educational opportunities
such as internships or study abroad. The Indiana University Center for Postsecondary
Research produces the survey each year to measure how students and faculty interact
and learn. The latest, results of which will be released Thursday, found that colleges
should “seek ways to more effectively engage student veterans in effective
educational practices and provide them with the supportive environments that
promote success.”

111. Veterans, Less Engaged but Satisfied - Inside Higher Ed http://t.co/7N0QQKM

“The veterans are predominantly male and more likely than non-veterans to be “older,
enrolled part-time, first-generation students, transfer students, and distance
learners.” Also, they are twice as likely as non-veterans to report “at least one
disability.” Finally, veterans are less likely to attend what the survey deems
"baccalaureate arts and sciences colleges” and “the most research-intensive
doctorate-granting universities’ than their peers. Most enroll in medium and large
master’s degree-granting institutions. Despite the fact that they spend as much time
studying as their non-veteran peers, veterans do not “participate equally in other
forms of engagement,” even when the surveyors statistically control for certain demographic traits and institutional characteristics. For instance, freshman and senior veterans reported that they are “less engaged with faculty” and perceive “less campus support” than non-veterans.


"Fifty-seven percent of adults in bridge programs possess educational skills below the 10th-grade level, with 19 percent having skills below the sixth-grade level. Sixty-seven percent of survey respondents said people who complete their programs are likely to enroll in further education or training within six months. Sixty percent of respondents report that they structure their programs in a “learning by doing” format. By 2018, the report said, two-thirds of the jobs in the American economy will require a postsecondary credential. At the same time, says the National Commission on Adult Literacy, 80 million to 90 million adult workers have low basic skills and are not prepared for those jobs because they lack a high-school degree or its equivalent. Low-skilled adults represent a huge potential reservoir of workers to meet the future work-force needs of employers, Mr. Alssid said."


"Seventy percent of California’s degree-seeking community college students failed to earn a credential or degree -- or to transfer to four-year universities -- within six years, concludes a new study. Most students drop out quickly, reports the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy and the Campaign for College Opportunity. Between 2003 and 2009, only 40 percent of students earned at least 30 college credits, which is considered “the minimum needed to provide an economic boost in jobs that require some college experience,” reports the LA Times. Blacks and Latinos did worse: Only 26% of black students and 22% of Latino students had completed a degree or certificate or transferred after six years, compared to 37% of whites and 35% of Asian Pacific Islanders. Students fail because they’re not prepared for college-level reading, writing and math. Many are juggling jobs and family responsibilities too, of course, but college readiness is the make-or-break issue."


"Equally strange, you would discover that some academically elite schools that do not give athletic scholarships—because they are nominally committed to academics over athletics—give away a large portion of their highly competitive admissions slots to athletes, even in the most obscure sports, such as squash. For instance, Williams College, which admits only 17 percent of applicants, recruits 66 athletes per year. That’s 13 percent of the incoming freshman class that is dedicated to third-rate
(literally, as Williams plays Division III sports) athletes over first-rate students. Take a look at the NEWSWEEK College Guide and you will find Williams, along with its small-school rivals Middlebury and Bowdoin, and Ivy League members Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Cornell, on our list of the top 25 schools that are “Stocked With Jocks.” You probably would conclude that these American institutions of higher learning have their priorities weirdly out of whack. And you would be right."


"The study's results show disparities between ethnic groups. "Among white test-takers, 16% scored below the minimum score required by the Army. For Hispanic candidates, the rate of ineligibility was 29%. And for African-American youth, it was 39," the study says. Recruits must score at least a 31 on the test to meet minimum eligibility requirements. Higher scores can qualify recruits for enlistment bonuses and advanced training."

116. Poorest pupils '55 times less likely to go to Oxbridge' - BBC News: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-12048629](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-12048629)

"The Sutton Trust has the percentages of pupils who qualified for free lunches when they were at school - a measure of deprivation - attending each of England's universities. The proportion was 0.8% at both Oxford and Cambridge, while more than 40% of their students came from independent schools. And in general, pupils from private schools were 22 times more likely to go to a top university than those who had been on free school meals, the Trust said.

The Trust said the greatest factor determining how many poorer students go to university is the fact that so few of them get the grades they need - something many top institutions also point out."


"Proprietary schools charge a lot more than public colleges—an average of $14,174 this year, compared with $2,544 at public two-year institutions and $7,020 for in-state tuition at public four-year institutions, according to the College Board. But students frequently choose proprietary schools over public colleges because for-profits do so much to limit the hassle of enrolling and applying for aid, and because students can take the classes they need quickly and get on with their lives."

118. 30 Ways to Rate a College - by Alex Richards and Ron Coddington - [http://chronicle.com/article/30-Ways-to-Rate-a-College/124160/](http://chronicle.com/article/30-Ways-to-Rate-a-College/124160/)
"That indicates a lack of agreement among them on what defines quality. Much of the emphasis is on “input measures” such as student selectivity, faculty-student ratio, and retention of freshmen. Except for graduation rates, almost no “outcome measures,” such as whether a student comes out prepared to succeed in the work force, are used."


"Nearly two-thirds of respondents said the contents of individual award letters were clear and easy to understand, but more than half said that letters from different colleges were hard to compare. Almost seven-eighths of respondents said award letters should be standardized."

120. Early Decision Up, Yet Still Small Part of Admissions Pie, by Caralee Adams - http://t.co/Qr19mFc

"Early decision is when a student applies to his first-choice school and, if accepted, the decision is binding. Early action is similar to early decision, but the student doesn’t have to commit immediately. She can still apply to other colleges and wait to make a decision until spring. About 18 percent of colleges offer early decision and 24 percent have early action plans, according to the 2010 State of Admissions Report by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). These plans are more common at private colleges."


"Start asking hard questions about your reasons for going to college, which college is likely to offer you a high-quality education, and what your chances are of finding a job that meets your expectations after graduation. If you’re aiming high, be prepared for a long and intense competition that doesn’t end when you enter the job market. If you do not see yourself at an elite university, is it better to go for a two-year rather than four-year college education and then opt for further training while employed?"


"The sluggish economy and rising costs of college have only intensified questions about whether expensive, prestigious colleges make any difference. Do their graduates make more money? Get into better professional programs? Make better connections? And are they more satisfied with their lives, or at least with their work?"

"Stony Brook is typical of American colleges and universities these days, where national surveys show that nearly half of the students who visit counseling centers are coping with serious mental illness, more than double the rate a decade ago. More students take psychiatric medication, and there are more emergencies requiring immediate action."


"First things first, do not pick a school strictly because it has one very specific major that you're interested in. I can't tell you how many aspiring doctors I met freshman year that ultimately became passionate art history aficionados, or how many future TV directors that discovered that their true interest lies in history. Once you get to college you'll discover that students usually change their major as often as they change their clothes. Go to a well-rounded school that can offer you a substantive education in several disciplines. Being stuck in a town you don't like, at a school you don't like, in a major that, after investing tens of thousands of dollars, you realize you don't like, is no fun."

125. Even with free tuition, hurdles remain for raising number of college graduates, by David Jesse - Hechinger Report http://t.co/ctzrZe1

"Just 54 percent of the first recipients are either still in college or have graduated, a stark reminder that it will take more than money to achieve the president’s ambitious goal of leading the world in college attainment by 2020. Nationally, getting students through college has long been a challenge: only half of those who start certificate or degree programs at two- and four-year institutions finish within six years, U.S. Education Department data show.

“We took the first hurdle down [not having money for college] and now can see all the hurdles behind it,” said Michelle Miller-Adams, a visiting scholar at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research in Kalamazoo and author of the first comprehensive study of the initiative."


"Other Ivy League schools that have released their early admissions decisions include Brown, Dartmouth, the University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell. Brown admitted just under 20 percent of its early applicant pool, a 3 percent decrease from last year, according to the Brown Daily Herald. Dartmouth admitted 4 percent fewer early applicants than it did last year according to the The Dartmouth, with 25.5 percent acceptance for the class of 2015. Penn admitted 26 percent of its early applicant pool, a 5 percent decrease from last year, according to the Daily Pennsylvanian."
"Thus far, Elon University in North Carolina has accepted the highest percentage of applicants with an 84 percent rate, followed by American University at 72 percent and Dickinson College at 69 percent. The colleges that accepted the lowest percentage of early applications include Stanford University, 13 percent; Georgetown University, 17 percent; and Dartmouth College (25 percent). Duke University accepted 29 percent of its early applicants, a record amount.

Notable for students applying regular decision is that some of the schools reported filling nearly half of the class of 2015 in the early round -- the University of Pennsylvania accepted 49 percent of incoming freshmen, John Hopkins University admitted 42 percent and Dartmouth 40 percent."

"Many schools’ early admission rates appear high because coaches often push recruited athletes, who are pre-screened, through early to ensure commitments. Yale University, for example, accepted 730, or 13.9 percent, of its 5,261 early applications last year. Meanwhile, Yale says it accepted just 1,309, or 5.6 percent, of the 23,273 regular candidates. But Yale spokesman Tom Conroy noted that many of the early applicants were recruited athletes."

"Forty different paths, many that began in distant lands, have brought them together. Through hard work, caring parents, and perceptive teachers, they've conquered challenges. Now, they've made it to the top of their class. Here is a snapshot of Boston's 2010 valedictorians."

"A majority of college graduates take longer to earn a degree than what is commonly thought to be the “normal” amount of time it should take—4 years for a bachelor’s degree and 2 years for an associates degree."

"At UPenn, for example, nearly half of the freshman class has already been admitted, according to my back-of-the-envelope calculations. At Haverford, Johns Hopkins and Bowdoin, the comparable figure is at or near 40 percent."
By allowing the most motivated — and, at times, some of the most financially able — applicants to lock in their college choices in December, selective colleges have in past years drawn criticism. The institutions have responded that it is in their interest to accept those applicants who are deemed the most qualified, and who have done sufficient research on a university to commit to it as their first choice."


"Thirty percent of students at Spelman, a historically black women's college in Atlanta, qualified for federal Pell Grants eight years ago; almost 50 percent do today, said Beverly Daniel Tatum, the college's president. Demographic data project that trend will continue, as the population of college-going black women grows and includes a higher proportion of low-income students. Spelman's graduation rate, about 82 percent, far exceeds the national average, but Ms. Tatum thinks it should be higher. "When students don't finish," she said, "it is almost always related to their financial situation."

133. Avoid These 4 Financial Aid Whoppers, by Lynn O'Shaughnessy - [http://t.co/tEMM3Ce](http://t.co/tEMM3Ce)

"Odds are that you will increase your chances of capturing financial aid if you can avoid common financial aid myths. Here are four of the biggest financial aid whoppers:"


"Graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics -- the overwhelming majority of all immigrants in the United States -- are far below those for whites. The trend line therefore suggests that the country will be facing a growing shortage of educated Americans as global competition intensifies, particularly as other countries' graduation levels rise."


"Roughly 22 million undergraduates attended college at some point in 2007-8, and the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study from that year provides a snapshot of where students are coming from and how they pursue their educations. More than a third of all undergraduates attend part-time, and most are not affluent. That's reflected in where students go to college—more than twice as many undergraduates attend the University of Phoenix's online campus as go to an Ivy League college. You can explore students' demographics for yourself below."
136. Colleges With The Lowest Graduation Rates -
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/15/colleges-with-the-lowest-_n_797119.html#s208556

"The Chronicle found that overall, graduation rates at American higher education institutions have declined by 33 percent since 2002 -- with the recession as a likely cause. Below are the 12 public and private research universities with lowest graduation rates. The Chronicle has a searchable list of all colleges and universities included in their research."

137. Standardized snake oil, by Marion Brady:
http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answersheet/guest-bloggers/standardized-snake-oil---.html

"As a mountain of research makes clear, what ails them is primarily long-term poverty and the myriad problems poverty spawns. That’s a matter I’m not qualified to write about, but for those who think test scores actually mean something important, I’ll note in passing that Finland always ranks near the top, and their child poverty rate is less than 3%, while America’s rate is over 20% and climbing rapidly. Those who believe skilled teachers can level the education playing field enough to erase that difference in the quality of the material they’re given to work with aren’t just not in the game, they’re not even in the ball park."

138. 14 Things You Didn’t Know About College Students, by Lynn O'Shaughnessy -
http://t.co/HWVU1UG

"Did you know, for instance, that only 48% of undergraduates attend college full-time? This week The Chronicle of Higher Education assembled some statistics on undergraduates in such categories as household income, gender and where students are attending college that could change your perception of the typical college kid. Here are 14 facts about undergrads:"

139. Colleges With The Highest Graduation Rates -
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/14/colleges-with-the-highest_1_n_796136.html#s206355

"On Harvard's heels are Yale University and the University of Notre Dame, with rates of 97 and 96 percent. Among public research universities, the University of Virginia had the highest graduation rate in 2008 at 93 percent, followed by the College of William and Mary and the University of California-Berkeley."

140. Graduation Gap Bowl 2010 -
http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2010/12/11/12_11_10_graduation_gap_bowl/

See the graduation gap on the football teams in upcoming bowls.

"According to Mr. Lammy, last year the whole of Oxford University admitted just one black student, and Cambridge University does not have a single black faculty member. . . . A spokeswoman for Oxford said that Mr. Lammy’s arguments “don’t stack up.” In a statement, the university said lack of success in secondary school was the biggest barrier to blacks’ admission, noting that “in 2009, 29,000 white students got the requisite grades for Oxford compared to just 452 black students.” “Black students apply disproportionately for the most oversubscribed subjects,” it said, further reducing their chances of success."

142. Md.’s Towson University conquers ‘graduation gap’ by Daniel de Vise - http://t.co/8ffofsd via @washingtonpost

"In 10 years, according to school data, Towson has raised black graduation rates by 30 points and closed a 14-point gap between blacks and whites. University leaders credit a few simple strategies: admitting students with good grades from strong public high schools, then tracking each student’s progress with a network of mentors, counselors and welcome-to-college classes."

143. Emphasizing Sports Over Academics Sets Up Black Boys to Lose, by Richard Whitmire - http://t.co/r4Utc5k via @educationweek

"It’s perhaps understandable that high school boys ignore the odds and insist that academics don’t matter because they have a shot at the pros. But parents should know better. A community that pushes sports over academics is doing a terrible disservice to its children, who will find themselves in deep trouble when their athletic aspirations fail to materialize and they don’t have the academic background to do much else."


"Over the past year, for example, the unemployment rate for college grads under age 25 has averaged 9.2 percent, up from 8.8 percent a year earlier and 5.8 percent in the first year of the recession that began in December 2007. That means recent grads have about the same level of unemployment as the general population. It also suggests that many employed recent grads may be doing work that doesn’t require a college degree. Even more disturbing, there is no guarantee that unemployed or underemployed college grads will move into much better jobs as conditions improve."

145. Education Week: Study: States Must Move Faster to Close Achievement Gaps, by Mary Ann Zehr - http://t.co/BGp8XFI via @educationweek
"In Washington State, for example, the Center on Education Policy predicts it will take 105 years to close the gap between white and African-American students in 4th grade reading at the rate it’s going. By contrast, if Louisiana continues at the same pace in narrowing the gap between those same two groups of students in 4th grade reading, the gap will be closed in 12.5 years."

146. The Case for Early Decision, by Robert J. Massa - http://nyti.ms/fuagT1

"Here’s what colleges typically don’t make clear: Although early decision is binding, no college will hold a student to a contract if a family determines that the financial aid package is inadequate, regardless of how much assistance the college offers or what the needs analysis-scholarship eligibility criteria suggests. That’s right. If the family says they can’t afford it, files an appeal and the college still doesn’t meet their expectations, they can withdraw their child’s application without penalty."

147. When Will Black Churches Start Their Own Schools? by RiShawn Biddle - http://dropoutnation.net/2010/12/10/black-churches-start-schools/

"If education is truly the most-important civil rights issue of this era, it means that black churches must play their part in ensuring that every child in the pews and communities they serve are educated in cultures of geniuses. It is as important for them to step up and embrace school reform as it was for them to combat Jim Crow segregation fifty years ago. For these churches, they can learn this important lesson from another civil rights movement — the effort by Catholics to receive equal treatment in public schools: You must take education into your own hands and start your own schools for the children in your flock."


"The report found soaring enrollments — and revenue — at 30 for-profit colleges by students whose education is covered by the Defense Department or by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, passed by Congress in 2008 to ensure that Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans could attend college at no cost. Enrollments increased from 23,766 in 2006 to 109,167 last year and reached 100,702 by the first half of this year."

149. Shortage of Math and Science Graduates Is a Myth, by Walt Gardner - http://t.co/K0ouJ3g

"A record 49,562 doctorate degrees were awarded in the 2008-09 academic year, representing a 1.6 percent increase over the 2007-08 year. According to the foundation, the growth was largely due to increases in the number of degrees in science and engineering. In 2009, 67.5 percent of all doctorates were in these two fields, a 1.9 percent increase over the previous academic year. Yet despite this growth, companies continue to insist that they need to recruit abroad because of a
shortage domestically. The more likely explanation is that they prefer looking overseas because H1-B visa holders are willing to work for below-market wages."

150. Online And For-Profit Colleges Face Aid Audits by Education Dept, by Goldie Blumenstyk - [http://chronicle.com/article/OnlineFor-Profit-Colleges/125705/](http://chronicle.com/article/OnlineFor-Profit-Colleges/125705/)

"The department, which has been beefing up the compliance-office staffing in its Office of Federal Student Aid, expects to conduct about 300 program reviews of student-aid operations next year, in contrast to about 200 this year."

151. The 'Real World' Skills You Acquire During the Admissions Process, by Ann Derry - [http://nyti.ms/fXKjFn](http://nyti.ms/fXKjFn)

"In short, applying for college isn’t just a hideous process to be endured. It is excellent preparation for the rest of your life — a step into the “adult world” when you acquire basic skills like writing a résumé, setting goals, doing research, organizing your thoughts and your time, persevering to get what you want, following through."


"Since 1962 the achievement gap between disadvantaged populations and more affluent ones has widened. At one extreme urban school districts graduate half or fewer of their students. (Arbanas, 2001) At the other extreme 11% of American students are now among the top 10 percent of world achievers. “If you’re in the top economic quarter of the population, your children have a 76% chance of getting through college and graduating by age 24. . . . If you’re in the bottom quarter, however, the figure is 4 %.” (Loeb, 1999) White students’ achievement in reading, math and science ranks 2nd, 7th and 4th when compared with students worldwide. Black and Hispanic students however rank 26, 27th and 27th on these basic skills. (Bracey, 2002)


"According to the report, one reason for-profit colleges focus on veterans and service members is because their tuition benefits can count as a nonfederal source of money, helping the colleges remain eligible for other sources of student aid. Over the past five years, veteran and military tuition benefits flowing to 20 of the largest for-profit colleges grew about 700 percent, from $66.6-million in 2006 to a projected $521.2-million in 2010, says the report.

In the conference call, Mr. Harkin said it "makes no sense" that tuition benefits aren’t counted toward the federal share of the 90-10 formula."

"But data available now tells us that poverty, as usual, had a huge impact on PISA reading test scores for American students. American students in schools with less than 10% of students on free and reduced lunch averaged 551, higher than the overall average of any OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] country. Those in schools with 10% to 25% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch averaged 527, which was behind only Korea and Finland. In contrast, American students in schools with 75% or more of children in poverty averaged 446, second to last among the 34 OECD countries."


"A report released today by the Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which has been examining aggressive recruitment practices and high student loan default rates in the burgeoning for-profit education industry over the past several months, shows the share of their revenue coming from veterans has increased fivefold from 2008 to 2010."


"The film portrays the pressures when schools pile on hours of homework and coaches turn sports into year-round obligations. Left somewhat unexamined is the role of parents whose high expectations contribute the most pressure of all. “Everyone expects us to be superheroes,” one high school senior in the film says."

Colleges Urged to Play Greater Role in Regional Development Efforts, by Karin Fischer - http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Are-Urged-to-Play-a/125657/

"Participants in the two-day conference, “Providing a Uniquely American Solution to Global Innovation Challenges: Unleashing Universities in Regions,” delved into the various ways colleges can help build stronger local economies, including acting as conveners for conversations about regional development, aligning their curricula with local elementary and secondary schools, and producing and retaining well-educated workers."

Dropout rate for California black students hits 37%, by Jill Tucker - http://t.co/73iPZR6
"The 37 percent African American dropout rate, up three percentage points from the prior year, was far above that of any other ethnic subgroup. Hispanic students had the second highest rate at 27 percent."

159. Poor white boys 'more likely to struggle at primary school,' by Graeme Paton - Telegraph - [http://t.co/ql2nr7x](http://t.co/ql2nr7x)

"White British boys from the most deprived families perform worse at the age of 11 than any other group, it was disclosed. They are around 50 per cent less likely to start secondary education with an acceptable standard of the three-Rs than other pupils. Poor children from black African, black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani families all performed better than their white British classmates, figures show."

160. Elementary Students Encouraged to Set College Goals, by Caralee J. Adams - [http://t.co/PG8wmck](http://t.co/PG8wmck) via @educationweek

"In the push to boost college-completion rates, high schools have often been the focus of college-readiness efforts, but now the reach is going even deeper into middle and elementary schools. Some educators feel it’s too late in high school to start introducing the concepts of college, high expectations, and academic achievement."


"More than 36 percent of the tuition payments made in the first year of the program — a total of $640 million in tuition and fees — went to for-profit colleges, like the University of Phoenix, according to data compiled by the Department of Veterans Affairs, even though these colleges serve only about 9 percent of the overall population at higher education institutions nationwide."


Scores from the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment to be released Tuesday show 15-year-old students in the U.S. performing about average in reading and science, and below average in math. Out of 34 countries, the U.S. ranked 14th in reading, 17th in science and 25th in math."

163. Study: Most Students Fail to Meet Common-Standards Bar, by Catherine Gewertz - [http://t.co/hugFRFg](http://t.co/hugFRFg) via @educationweek

"The resulting profile is one of a student body largely unprepared for the common standards. The problem was worse in mathematics than in English/language arts, and worse for racial and ethnic minority students than for their white peers."

"The report, issued by Complete College America and prepared by FutureWorks, argues that it may be more viable for many Americans with limited time to earn a certificate than to earn a college degree. And the report notes that while those who take some courses toward a degree but do not finish are unlikely to gain much economically from their efforts, there is substantial evidence that certificates do advance people economically."

165. The Completion Shortfall Complete College America - http://t.co/ybOFn0S

"To name only a few of the many reasons: inadequate academic preparation, poorly designed and delivered remediation, broken credit transfer policies, confusing financial aid programs, a culture that rewards enrollment instead of completion, and a system too often out of touch with the needs of the today’s college student."

166. Study: Graduation rates between blacks, whites widening - http://usat.ly/g32Jxk RT @USATODAY

"The graduation success rate for black players went from 58% to 60% this year among the 70 bowl teams. But for white players, the graduation rates increased from 77% last year to 80% this year."


"College is the key gatekeeper to the middle class. If you can figure out how to make it to a degree, you can pretty much guarantee a middle class. So many are kept back from entering the gates."


"This paper attempts to provide additional information on the impact of loans on college decisions by focusing on the period during which college loans were made available to all families, regardless of financial need. The major shift in aid policy occurred due to the 1992 Higher Education Reauthorization Act (HEA92)."


"Although there are many barriers to college access and success for low-income and minority students, most can be grouped into three major categories. The first set of major barriers relates to cost. . . . A second major set of barriers to college
enrollment and persistence is academic preparation. . . . The third major impediment to higher education for many students, particularly those from low-income families, is the complexity of the college admissions process and financial aid systems, as well as a lack of accurate information about higher education costs. College attendance is the culmination of a series of steps and benchmarks, and this current landscape is too complex and difficult for many families to decipher and navigate."

170. College Grad Rates Stay Exactly the Same, by Kevin Carey

"All in all, this confirms what we already knew: College works well for the kind of student who has been going to college for a long time: white middle- and upper-class children of college graduates who enroll full-time directly after leaving high school."


"Still, only about 11 percent of early-college graduates nationwide received associate’s degrees, far below the original goal of 100 percent. And the average early-college student graduates with just 22 credits, less than a year’s worth of college coursework."


"Low-income families depend heavily on government support in order to make college a reality. This support comes through need-based policies, such as Pell Grants and Perkins Loans. Unfortunately, there has been a national shift towards merit-based aid and support, both of which increase affordability for the middle class."


"Although the Georgia plan has cost $1.2 billion over the last seven years, it has only increased enrollment by about 100,000 students. That means that, in the end, 80 percent of the funds went to students who would have gone to college anyway. At the same time, the program boosted University of Georgia state schools’ average incoming SAT scores by about 100 points, making it more difficult for lower-scoring students to gain admission."

174. Grading Higher Education: Giving Consumers The Information They Need, by Bridget Terry Long:
"The problem is that going to college is an expensive investment. The cost of four years of college can exceed $100,000, and over a quarter of four-year college students graduate with over $25,000 of student loan debt. Moreover, the college investment is a high-risk proposition. While the average return on a postsecondary credential is substantial, justifying the cost in most cases, there is no guarantee that a person will benefit. Only half of college entrants complete a bachelor’s degree and so many students forfeit the potential returns of such a degree."


"The researchers who conducted the study found that an increase in need-based aid resulted in higher tuition and fees at both public and private institutions in the state. Public colleges also lowered their average institutional-aid awards, while there was no change at private colleges."

176. Dropout Rates Dropping, but Don't Celebrate Yet, by Andrew J. Rotherham - http://bit.ly/gVhooK - reading from @time

"According to the report, by Johns Hopkins University, along with two education-oriented groups, America’s Promise Alliance and Civic Enterprises, eight states had graduation rates below 70% in 2008, and 2.2 million students still attend dropout factories. An achievement gap also persists: only 64% of Hispanic students and 62% of African Americans graduated in 2008, while 81% of white students did."


"Bridget Terry Long, professor of education and economics at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education, says that, while the economic benefits of a postsecondary degree have been well documented, the escalating price tag and rates of default on student loans make the prospect of attending college an increasingly risky proposition. “Giving students and their families better information would enable them to avoid unworthy college investments that would leave them with substantial debt and little in the form of skills,” Long writes in her paper, "Grading Higher Education: Giving Consumers the Information They Need."


"Men and women graduated at roughly comparable rates, but there were significant differences by race: 45.5 percent of Asian students had earned bachelor’s degrees in six years, compared to 36.4 percent of white students, 16.9 percent of Hispanic, 16.7 percent of black, and 27.3 percent of mixed race students."

"By the end of the six-year period, 9 percent of the students earned certificates, 9 percent associate degrees, and 31 percent bachelor’s degrees. The numbers are similar to those of the last cohort the department followed, which began college in 1995-6.
Among students who began at public two-year colleges, 9 percent earned certificates, 14 percent associate degrees, and 12 percent bachelor’s degrees. Among those who began at four-year colleges, 2 percent received certificates, 5 percent associate degrees, and 58 percent bachelor’s degrees."


"The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools"


"Across education and industry, research by Mr. Sackett; Neal Schmitt, a psychology professor at Michigan State University in East Lansing; and others shows the biggest predictor of success is a student’s conscientiousness, as measured by such traits as dependability, perseverance through tasks, and work ethic. Agreeableness, including teamwork, and emotional stability were the next-best predictors of college achievement, followed by variations on extroversion and openness to new experiences, Mr. Sackett found."