

## July 2007 Educational Equity Brief

1. The 2007 Budget reconciliation measures for the Higher Education Act recently approved by the Senate are:
  - a. \$17.3 billion over five years for “Promise Grants” which go to Pell Grant recipients with the greatest financial need. It’s the equivalent of raising the maximum Pell Grant to \$5,100 next year and to \$5,400 by 2011.
  - b. Institute “income-based repayment” on student loans in which loan payments will be capped at a percentage of the borrower’s income and canceled after 25 years of repayment.
  - c. Raise the amount that students can earn through the “income protection allowance” without reducing their financial aid awards.
  - d. Forgive loan debts after 10 years for borrowers who spend a certain amount of time working in public service or addressing other national needs.
  - e. Increase to \$30,000 from \$20,000 the family income level at which a student is automatically eligible to receive the maximum Pell Grant.
  - f. Creation of a “Higher Education Price Increase Watch List” that ranks institutions with tuition and fees that “outpace the applicable price index” for similar institutions.
  - g. Open the Academic Competitiveness Grant Program to students attending at least part-time and to students attending certificate programs.
  - h. Funding these changes will be financed by cutting lender profits.

“Students’ Gain, Lenders’ Pains,” By Doug Lederman, Inside *Higher Education*, June 21, 2007.

2. A Senate bill is proposing to add accreditation accountability to the Higher Education Act. It would require accreditors to ensure that colleges “use empirical evidence” and “external indicators” to show how they fare in student retention, course and program completion, graduation, state licensure, job placement and enrollment in graduate programs. Making college more transparent about their success. Critics are citing it as a move towards expanding NCLB to higher education.

“Senate Higher Ed Bill Emerges (Slowly).” By Doug Lederman, *Inside Higher Education*, June 19, 2007.

3. **Voluntary accountability at colleges.** With increasing discussion in the legislature about student learning outcomes at the collegiate level, colleges have taken a step towards a “Voluntary System of Accountability.” The American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges have taken steps towards

instituting a voluntary reporting system on student learning outcomes such as graduation and retention rates, financial aid, cost of attendance and how students measure on learning outcomes.

“Campus Accountability Proposals Evolve,” By Doug Lederman, *Inside Higher Education*, June 26, 2007.

4. **A new way to look at graduation rates.** The president of California State University at Long Beach, F. King Alexander, is promoting a new way to calculate graduation rates. He claims that the current way of dividing the number of graduates by the number of freshmen admitted six years earlier only works for elite institutions where the student population generally follows the traditional path of enrolling full-time and graduating from their initial institution. However, many state schools and lower-tier schools are serving quite a different student population; many students enroll part-time, need remediation coursework and transfer from their initial college. Alexander wants to add total graduates and percentage of Pell Grant eligible students who graduate to the traditional six-year graduation metric. He claims the addition of these two items gives a better picture of how well schools are educating students since many Pell Grant eligible students are also the students coming from low-quality high schools and needing remediation coursework. In essence, a school is very successful if it's graduating a large number of Pell Grant eligible students.

“Challenging the Measure of Success” By Scott Jaschik, *Inside Higher Education*, June 6, 2007.

5. **Looking at the long-term benefits of education for disadvantaged students.** Research on the longitudinal affects of a college education for disadvantaged students shows that even though they may not appear successful according to traditional graduation metrics (i.e. graduating within six years), the long-term benefits of higher education are significant. Three-fourths of college students today are not traditional college students, and when holding them to metrics developed around the traditional 18-year old college student who enters a four-year college, they appear unsuccessful. The CUNY researchers found that more than 70% of the disadvantaged students in the sampling eventually earned their bachelor's degree. More than half took more than six years to graduate and about one-fourth took more than 15 years. And of the 70 percent who earned their degrees, they were earning on average \$7,525 more per year than students who never enrolled in college.

“The Long View on Gauging College Success,” By Elia Powers, *Inside Higher Education*, June 15, 2007.

6. **The percentage of the US population with a bachelor's degree has been declining due to policy changes while other countries are moving ahead.** In 1998, the U.S. topped the list of the 30 industrialized countries with its 25 to 34 year-old population with bachelor's degrees at 27%, but by 2004 the U.S. ranked fifth with 30% while other countries were increasing bachelor degree attainment more rapidly. Researchers predict if our education policies remain stagnant, we will drop to 9<sup>th</sup> by 2007, 13<sup>th</sup> by 2009 and 18<sup>th</sup> by 2019. They go on to conclude that and international redistribution of wealth will follow given that research shows that wealth is so strongly correlated with educational attainment. The researchers cite education policy changes as major factors in the stagnation of degree attainment in the US, including: the loss of over 60%

of the purchasing power of the Pell Grant, shifts from grant aid to loan aid, the shift of educational loan program costs from taxpayers to student borrowers, tax credit plans that benefit the middle and upper classes. And, at the state level, the researchers cite the decline in state tax fund investments in higher education and the expansion of merit grants as major steps backwards.

“Bachelor’s Degree Attainment of Young Adults in Industrial Democracies 1996 to 2004,”  
*Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, April 2007.

7. **How to help first-generation college students succeed.** Research on how to help first-generation college students succeed from the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University at Bloomington says:
  1. Teach students how to use college resources effectively. Likewise, learning communities have proved to be very effective.
  2. Develop networks and early-warning systems to support students when they need help.
  3. Connect every student in a meaningful way with some activity or positive role model. This group or person can significantly help carry the student forward.
  4. Remove obstacles to student engagement and success.

“How to Help Students Achieve,” By George Kuh, *The Chronicle Review, Section B of the Chronicle of Higher Education, Volume LIII, Number 41*, June 15, 2007.

8. **What happens to Latino college students?** A recent report (“An Examination of Latina/o Transfer Students in California’s Postsecondary Institutions”) by the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA found that out of every 100 Latino students entering college, 75 will go to community college, 17 will enter a California State University and 8 will enter a University of California. Furthermore, of the 75 who enter community college, only 7 will transfer – 6 to a CSU and 1 to a UC. This is particularly troublesome because the transfer rate to a four-year university are far below what they should be based on student’s expectations. Forty percent of Latino community college students claim that they intend to transfer to a four-year college.

“California’s Transfer ‘Mismatch,’” Scott Jaschik, *Inside Higher Education*, June 8, 2007.

9. According to a 2000 census, school segregation is still very much alive. Nationwide, for all elementary and secondary public school students:
  - a. In the poorest schools, 80% of the student body are black or Latino

- b. Over 50% of black and Latino students attend schools where 75% of the student body is low-income. Only 5% of white students attend schools with such a high portion of low-income students.
- c. Only 14% of white students attend a multi-racial school.
- d. 40% of black and Latino students attend intensely multi-racial schools (90% - 100% of students are from minority groups).

“Why Diversity Matters,” By Lee C. Bellinger, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 1, 2007.