



2012 Higher Education Seminar Background Content

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Degrees vs. Debt: Making College More Affordable

Our theme for this journalists-only event is "Degrees vs. Debt: Making College More Affordable," so we'll be diving into a critical topic with implications for students and families, policy makers, administrators, and the journalists who deal with them all. We'll break down new developments in student loan debt, college pricing, and faster/cheaper ways to get college degrees, among other topics. Below you'll find background information on the panels that will take place during the two-day seminar. The **event agenda can be found here** [<http://www.ewa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=DegreesVsDebtAgenda>].

Welcome

Charles Bantz—chancellor of Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)—and Jamie P. Merisotis, Lumina Foundation president and CEO, will begin the two-day seminar with introductory remarks. Patricia Rogan, the

executive associate dean of Indiana University School of Education at IUPUI, will also offer remarks.

The Lumina Foundation has helped springboard President Barack Obama's call for the U.S. to add 8 million new college graduates by 2020 with its own Goal 2025. The foundation's initiative seeks to increase the percentage of Americans with a college degree or certificate to 60 percent

by 2025, up from 42.5 percent, what the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development says is the current level of college completion.

Merisotis' op-ed in Huffington Post on college affordability: "We could start with the national workforce development system. Workers participating in job training programs should be seen for who they are -- students, who are acquiring new skills and knowledge. This learning should be recognized so that it can be applied to further education and degrees, making the dream of college a reality for many more while shortening the time it takes to earn a degree and making college more affordable."

US News and World Report write up on New America Foundation panel on college affordability, with remarks by Merisotis:

Defining 'Affordability'

In anticipation of College Board analyst Sandy Baum's presentation, take a look at the research and testing company's 2012 publications on trends in college costs, financial aid and economic rewards garnered from attending college.

Also, see her July study brief [[http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/g-1/\(Issue_Brief\)_Is_College_Affordable_July_2012.pdf](http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/g-1/(Issue_Brief)_Is_College_Affordable_July_2012.pdf)] for the Institute for Higher Education Policy: "As policymakers attempt to address the problem of funding postsecondary education in an environment of rising prices, strained government budgets, and limited household resources, it is constructive to think about what it really means for college to be affordable. Looking at rising published prices and thinking of paying those prices out of current incomes is misleading. This brief provides perspectives on what determines whether, when, and for whom college is affordable."

Dealing with Student Loan Debt: The Problems

Student loans have become a focal point in the national debate over college affordability. This session examines the impact that loan debt has on students, both while they're pursuing their degrees and after they've graduated.

Stephen Burd, New America Foundation (this panel's moderator) wrote about college loan debt collectors in August's issue of Washington Monthly: "Our current system for collecting student loans makes no distinction between deadbeats who cheat and the much greater numbers of people who just don't have the money to repay. As predatory debt collection agencies ruin the lives of more and more Americans, we are ignoring an easy and fair solution."

Chris LoCascio, founder of Fix UC, was invited by a Forbes writer to expound on his blog the particulars of free tuition proposal [<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesmarshallcrotty/2012/04/23/fix-uc-plan-ends-tuition-as-we-know-it-is-it-bloody-crazy-enough-to-actually-work/>] for the University of California system: "Fixes eliminate tuition for all students and generate substantially more revenue for the University of California. This is done by shifting student financial contributions to the time in their lives when they are earning income and can afford to fund their college education. Thus, most graduates of the UC would pay a rate, based on 5% of their annual income, to the

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University of California for 20 years to fund the educations of future generations of UC students.” Implementation would require the support of the federal government, and it anticipates doubling the revenue the system brings in now by 2020. The essay also criticizes Gov. Jerry Brown’s tax increase initiative for its unclear wording on how revenues will plug UC budget holes. LoCascio is a student of UC Riverside.

Also on tap is Vasti Torres, director of the Indiana University Project on Academic Success. She has examined the college enrollment and borrowing trends of non-traditional and under-represented populations. Recently, PAS teamed with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Research Center for a report in which they found one-third of college students transferred institutions in a five-year period. Find reports she and PAS have published here.

Dealing with Student Loan Debt: The Solutions

Lauren Asher is president of The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS). The organization releases reports that assess the impact of federal and state public policy decisions. It also conducts research on student debt. It’s most recent publication found that unemployment among young college graduates is at 8.8 percent, while two-thirds of seniors who have graduated carried with them debt, which averaged roughly \$26,000

Rohit Chopra, the student loan ombudsman at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, produces reports on the hardships various student cohorts face in repaying their college loans. Here is a summary of CFPB’s recent report on servicemen debt obligations and links to two previous reports.

Kim Clark, staff writer of Money, has written numerous articles on student debt and college finance. Some of those include profiles on students who saved big on their post-secondary educations, public school tuition increases, and a guide to student loans. She recently appeared on Baltimore’s NPR affiliate, WYPR, for a session on how consumer news affects higher education.

Lynn O’Shaughnessy, a college costs analyst who blogs at The College Solution, appears frequently as an op-ed guest in major publications. Here, she goes after Kiplinger’s list of best-value colleges, noting many of the schools listed are recognized by the Department of Education as some of the most expensive in the country.

New Perspectives on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

In this session, experts look at new approaches to measuring student learning, such as the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, which argues in favor of using internal assessment data to improve college academics.

Who’s Subsidizing Whom and Other Secrets of Tuition Pricing

Richard Vedder of Ohio University and Center for College Affordability and Productivity on switching to a full-calendar schedule in higher education: “Indeed, a strong argument can be made that the Middle Ages ended when farmers abandoned the medieval system of letting land lie fallow at least one year in three (the three field system), and moved to constant cultivation,

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using in this case some new crops, new techniques, and alternative forms of land tenure. Agriculture benefited by abandoning the practice of letting land lie fallow after 1400, so wouldn't universities benefit from stopping letting buildings lie fallow after 2011?"

And on why some individuals are not cut out for college: "Thus, at least a portion of the earnings premium associated with college has nothing to do with college per se, but rather with other traits."

Jon Marcus of Hechinger Report: "Syracuse University, for instance, identifies students who are overborrowing from private lenders and helps them stop by giving them direct grants for future semesters averaging \$5,000 to \$7,000 per year. Called the Money Awareness Program, the initiative has reduced the debt of some 90 to 100 sophomores, juniors, and seniors per year by an average of \$21,000 each. In exchange, recipients are required to attend money-management courses once every semester until they graduate."

The Delta Project, a higher education research group within the American Institutes for Research, published a series of briefs detailing where the money to pay for college comes from and what does it fund:

- Spending and Results: What Does the Money Buy? (PDF)
[<http://www.deltacostproject.org/resources/pdf/Delta-Cost-Trends-Outcomes.pdf>]
- Spending, Subsidies, and Tuition: Why Are Prices Going Up? What Are... (PDF)
[<http://www.deltacostproject.org/resources/pdf/Delta-Subsidy-Trends-Production.pdf>]
- Spending: Where Does the Money Go? (PDF)
[<http://www.deltacostproject.org/resources/pdf/Delta-Spending-Trends-Production.pdf>]
- Revenues: Where Does the Money Come From? (PDF)
[http://www.deltacostproject.org/pdfs/Revenue_Trends_Production.pdf]

Different Ways to a Degree

Tom Snyder, president of Ivy Tech Community College, the country's largest singly accredited community college system that educates 200,000 students in Indiana, spoke during a July Senate committee session on the different ways to a degree. Here is his testimony.

Southern New Hampshire University is in the news for two reasons: It's viewed as a cheaper alternative to the distance learning model for which for-profit universities are known; and it is also on the cusp of becoming the first college in the country to award students academic credits for what they know rather than the seat hours they've accumulated in their academic tenure.

SNHU has been ranked as one of the 50 most innovative companies by Fast Company in 2012; The Wall Street Journal mentioned the university as one of the institutions "schooling" for-profits on cost and access; and it's competency-based model of instruction has been discussed in full in various publications.

Turning the Page on Textbooks: More Affordable Options

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Plummeting prices for e-readers and tablet computers mean big things for the textbook industry, as more students and professors clamor for digital versions of traditional paper editions. What does this shift in the publishing world mean for college costs, and how are universities getting e-textbooks into the hands of students?

U.S. PIRG, a public interest group with multiple state chapters, has gone after the textbook publishing industry by documenting alleged free market disruptions on the part of the major companies. It has campaigned for more open-source textbooks, restrictions on business practices it says major publishers use to artificially increase the price of textbooks, and for more disclosure laws on textbook options for financially strapped students.

Bruce Hildebrand, Association of American Publishers, will speak on behalf of the major textbook companies.