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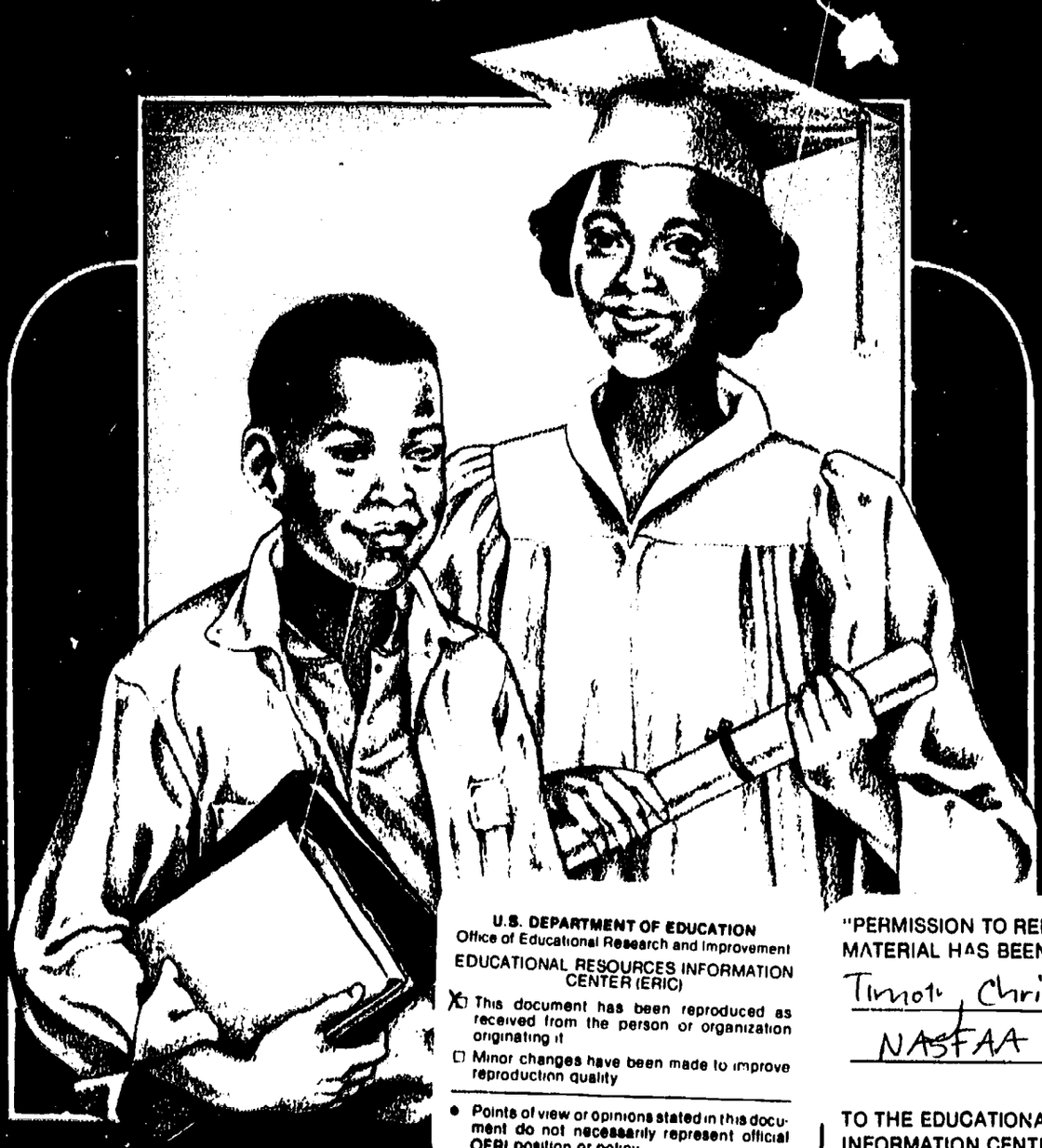
ABSTRACT

This document comprises a report on the agreements reached at a symposium on early awareness of postsecondary education. Representatives from 30 education organizations discussed a national agenda for early awareness programs and explored opportunities for collaboration. Early awareness programs are broadly based efforts to introduce students in the late elementary and early secondary grades to the increased opportunities available to high school graduates who enroll in a postsecondary education program. All intervention strategies should be based on the following concepts: (1) all student groups, including minorities and other at-risk groups, have high aspirations and are capable of academic achievement; (2) minority students have talents and abilities that are inhibited and obscured by the structure and practices of the education system; (3) instituting the necessary changes in the education system will take a significant expenditure and effort; and (4) schools must be assisted in providing necessary services through collaborative arrangements. The following program elements are necessary: (1) early parent and childhood education; (2) parent involvement; (3) tutoring and supplemental instruction; (4) efforts to build self-esteem and instill a positive attitude towards success through education; (5) mentoring, role models, and other support group interactions; (6) involvement of postsecondary student services staff; (7) guidance about preparation for the next levels of study and affirmation that students can succeed in any learning situation; and (8) program evaluation through long-term tracking of participants. Strategies are recommended for educators, the community, the private sector, and government. A list of four related research reports is attached. (FMW)

Certainty of Opportunity



A Report on the NASFAA/ACE Symposium on Early Awareness of Postsecondary Education

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators American Council on Education

The NASFAA/ACE Invitational Symposium on Early Awareness of Postsecondary Education

The following organizations have reviewed this report and endorse its findings:

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American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, *Dr. Dale Parnell, President*

American Association for Higher Education, *Dr. Russell Edgerton, President*

American Association of State Colleges and Universities, *Mr. Allan W. Ostar, President*

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The NASFAA/ACE Symposium on
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Education

July 1989

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
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Foreword

Twenty years ago, educational interventions targeted to the disadvantaged helped bring minorities--excluded for two centuries from the mainstream of American life--into schools and onto many of the nation's campuses. Over this period, an array of new programs, many of them supported by the federal government, helped to increase minority high school graduation rates and college enrollments. Since 1976, however, progress has stagnated. While high school graduation rates for minorities have continued to climb, college enrollments have not.

At a time when the United States faces increased competition from abroad and demographic challenges at home, we must ensure that our growing minority youth population will succeed in the classroom and will have access to good jobs at decent wages. In the words of John Porter, Chief Executive Officer of the Urban Education Alliance and former President of Eastern Michigan University, we must guarantee "a certainty of opportunity" for each member of the high school graduating class of 2001.

To that end, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) and the American Council on Education (ACE) have pledged their support to help shape a national agenda for early intervention and awareness programs.

This report presents information and strategies about planning, coordinating, implementing, and evaluating projects agreed upon by participants at the NASFAA/ACE Invitational Symposium on Early Awareness of Postsecondary Education. It also outlines the forces that should be mustered and policies that must be changed to establish an effective national program. ACE and NASFAA invite other organizations to help develop a national early awareness initiative as part of our continuing effort to strengthen the nation through commitment to the full participation of all citizens.

Dallas Martin
President
National Association of Student
Financial Aid Administrators

Robert H. Atwell
President
American Council on Education

Summary

In May 1988, the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS) challenged the nation to place efforts to increase minority participation in education and employment at the top of their public and private agendas. The report of the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, *One-Third of a Nation*, urged all sectors of society to promote opportunities for minorities so that, within 20 years, minority populations will have attained a social and economic quality of life at parity with the white majority.

To this end, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) has assisted in the development of several model early awareness programs, published a compendium of 85 such projects, and is testing information materials for junior high school students and their parents. Both ACE and NASFAA will continue to place this issue at the top of their agendas, and urge all other organizations that have a stake in education to do the same.

To begin a dialogue among the many organizations that need to be involved in meaningful early intervention and awareness initiatives, NASFAA and ACE sponsored the Invitational Symposium on Early Awareness of Postsecondary Education. This report presents the agreements reached at the symposium.

The symposium brought 48 representatives from nearly 30 education organizations to the Cannon Office Building of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., on November 16-17, 1988. These national education leaders, directors of minority affairs, testing specialists, financial aid administrators, philanthropists, counselors, and government officials worked from a common belief, grounded in research and tested by experience, that unequally prepared students can be educated to high levels of performance. Participants had the opportunity to contemplate the national agenda for early awareness programs and explore the role that their organization may appropriately play in the larger collaborative context.

Early awareness programs are defined as broadly based efforts to introduce students in the late elementary and early secondary grades to the increased opportunities available to those who persist through high school and enroll in a postsecondary education program. Such efforts primarily focus on students outside the traditional college-bound group who are considered to be at-risk of missing out on the benefits of successfully completing an educational experience beyond high school. Research has demonstrated that, more often than not, these students are members of minority groups.

Participants asserted that programs alerting young students and their parents to the value and availability of postsecondary education can be coordinated as part of a nationally focused effort to improve student retention in high school and preparation for postsecondary education and work. Real progress will have been made when every organization concerned about American education joins in the effort as an equal partner.

Background

Few leaders in education, business, and government still need to be convinced that it is in the nation's best interest to help minority students attain a certainty of opportunity for full participation in American life. An increasing minority youth population, high dropout rates, and the inability of the nation's poor to meet the rising cost of postsecondary education threaten our capacity to provide the skilled work force we need to be competitive in a global economy.

"The ultimate test is not whether students complete schooling, but whether they participate in the fullest sense in the life of society. . . . Can minorities participate in full complement in professional and managerial jobs in our society? Are they full partners, or confined to lower-level jobs? Can they go to college?"

Frank Newman

Today, there are significantly fewer youth to support our aging population. In 1950, there were 17 Americans working to support each retired person. By 1992, the ratio will be only three to one, and one of the three workers will be black, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American. Of the 3.6 million children who entered kindergarten in 1988 (the high school class of 2001), about one-third are minority students. One-quarter of the children were born in poverty. Some 15 percent fit in one or more of the following categories: mentally or physically handicapped, non-native speakers of English, children of teen mothers, or children of unmarried parents.

As a result of these sweeping demographic changes, the high percentages of school dropouts--already about half of students entering ninth grade in urban areas--are likely to increase. Unless there are serious, comprehensive, coordinated interventions at early stages in the lives of at-risk students, a significant percentage of the class of 2001 will be alienated from school by 6th grade and on the street by age 16. Many will not only join an underclass of citizens living in poverty, they will become what Frank Newman, President of the Education Commission of the States, refers to as "anti-citizens"--individuals who do not work, pay taxes, vote, or concern themselves with others, but instead drain resources. A significant number of these individuals may find community (and commerce) in gangs that require society to provide more police, wardens, and jails, or they may become homeless and require public shelter and assistance.

Henry Levin of Stanford University estimated several years ago that the cost of school dropouts, current ages 25-34, amounted conservatively to $77 billion every year: $71 billion in lost tax revenues; $3 billion for welfare and unemployment; and $3 billion for crime prevention. Educators note that it costs states more to

keep an individual in prison for one year than it costs to pay for four years of college.

In the 1960s, the United States saw educational opportunity as a means for society to lift the disadvantaged out of poverty and deprivation. In less than a decade, minority students were brought out of educational exclusion and into schools and colleges. Civil rights laws enacted in the mid-1960s were backed by federal enforcement, a system of financial aid for schools and students was established, and educational interventions such as the Head Start and TRIO programs were launched with measurable success. Convenient and inexpensive community colleges made higher education available to many groups for the first time. By 1975, minority enrollment reached a plateau--one-third of the black, white, and Hispanic 18-to-24-year-old populations were enrolled in college.

Today, minority children are better prepared relative to their white counterparts than they were ten years ago. The gaps in college performance, SAT and ACT scores, graduation rates, and even teenage unemployment have narrowed. In spite of these gains, college-going rates for minorities have risen little since 1976, and, in the case of blacks, have declined.

The problem is deeper than a lack of adequate information, preparation, aspiration, or limited financial aid. It is a problem of national will, leadership, and commitment. The report *One-Third of a Nation* noted that we are now at a turning point (see **Related Reports**). The next decade will determine whether we rekindle our commitment to increase minority participation in education, or whether we are "resigned to a long-term retreat" that sees gaps widen between minorities and whites.

One-Third of a Nation called on postsecondary educators to strengthen efforts to improve minority recruitment, retention, and graduation, and elected officials to assume responsibility for efforts to assure full participation of minorities in society. The report also called on private and volunteer organizations to initiate new programs to ensure minority advancement, and education leaders to improve coordination of programs from pre-school through graduate education. The challenge is not merely to make educational opportunities available to students, but to make those opportunities work for students so they can participate in society in the fullest sense.

Our knowledge-based economy provides fewer and fewer challenging and well-paying jobs for young people who lack postsecondary instruction. The income gap between students who complete high school and those who graduate from college has widened significantly. In the early 1970s, the gap in salaries between a 30 year-old man with a high school degree and one with a college degree was 16 percent. Today, that gap is 50 percent.

Given these vast changes in the fiber of American society, symposium participants charged that some popular assumptions about minorities and other at-risk groups must change to ensure that every student in the class of 2001 completes high school, enrolls in and completes a postsecondary education program, and has the opportunity to secure a good job. They offered the following concepts as cornerstones to all intervention strategies.

First, all student groups, including minorities and other at-risk groups, have high aspirations and are capable of achieving in school.

There is a growing amount of evidence to indicate that all students can succeed in education if provided the proper attention, support, and mentoring.

- Eugene Lang's "I Have a Dream" Foundation is one noble example. In 1981, Lang stunned the sixth grade class at P.S. 121 in New York's Harlem, the elementary school that he had attended, when he told the students he would provide the mentoring, tutoring, and financial support they needed to attend college. At this writing, 49 of the 51 students who remained in Harlem have graduated high school, and 33 of those students have enrolled in colleges. The Foundation has supported and inspired dozens of similar initiatives nationwide.

- The nation's traditionally black colleges continue to prove that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can earn baccalaureate and advanced degrees. While these institutions enroll only 18 percent of black postsecondary students initially, they award degrees to more than one-third of all black postsecondary students who graduate.

- Alternative education programs have been successful in helping low-achieving and alienated students complete school. Schools that take only dropouts and provide them with more individual attention graduate 80 percent of their students.

- The McKnight Black Doctoral Fellowship Program in Florida, which offers fellowships of $60,000 over four years to increase the number of qualified black faculty in the state, has had a tremendous effect in increasing the representation of minorities in graduate school, particularly in the sciences. In 1986, only 14 Ph.D.s were awarded to blacks nationwide in engineering, and only one black earned a Ph.D. in computer science. In the last two years, the McKnight Program alone has helped 25 black candidates matriculate in engineering and computer science programs.

Second, minority students have talents and abilities that are inhibited and obscured by the structure and practices of the education system.

The belief that minority students can master even the most basic skills is often the exception rather than the rule with many educators. Black students are disproportionately guided into special education programs or into non-academic curriculum tracks, which provide *de facto* segregation in schools. The first suggestion that students get to drop out may even come from school personnel, who tell them that they are not teachable. Other factors, such as the impersonality of large classes, the emphasis placed on seat time versus competency-based learning, and the limited numbers of culturally sensitive teachers in our schools have contributed significantly to the continued rise in the national high school dropout rate.

Moreover, critics charge that teachers, textbooks, diagnostic tests, and developmental tools do not recognize the value of diversity. Instead, they penalize those who differ from the majority.

Symposium participants asserted that new measures of minority success need to be devised. For example, Reginald Wilson, Senior Scholar at the American Council on Education, noted that standardized tests do not accurately measure the aptitude of minority students. "Those methods validate deep prejudices and are used by some as evidence that the best and brightest are white males despite the fact that women get better grades. In spite of their disparate impact, standardized test scores can be misinterpreted to confirm that minorities lack potential," he charged.

Wilson also criticized the recruitment and retention programs on our nation's campuses, claiming that they are not comprehensive, interconnected, monitored, or coordinated under a common mission.

It is no wonder, observers noted, that the military outperforms colleges in recruiting minority students. The military makes a strong case that the rank and file will be treated fairly, succeed on merit, and be given the opportunity to program computers, fly helicopters, and be part of a winning team. The military provides financial incentives and offers individuals the opportunity to enroll in a postsecondary education program through the GI Bill.

There is no similar perception of even-handedness in the academic world. Federal student financial aid has failed to keep pace with both inflation and the rise in postsecondary education costs. The recent trend towards dependence on loans versus grants is a major obstacle for low-income students, who may perceive low future earnings potential. This practice also ignores the bias that many cultures have against borrowing. Moreover, student aid programs have become increasingly complex and must compete with other social priorities for political attention. Forms and eligibility formulas are numerous and complicated, and the process is time consuming and often expensive.

Third, instituting the necessary changes will take a significant effort and considerably more resources than society has been willing to allocate.

In the words of John Porter: "Society has not yet accepted the fact that it may cost more to educate the next generation of so-called 'disadvantaged' than it has to educate the gifted of the past. That is America's problem. We must see a shifting of resources. . . . Until we say to ourselves that we may have to make a greater investment in the people we have to serve in the 21st century, we will not be able to move beyond where we are today."

The nation cannot adequately prepare its citizens for a new century using the methods and objectives of the past. Comprehensive, coordinated, and persistent interventions prior to high school will be required to develop the pool of human resources capable of reshaping our industries and institutions to allow for renewed economic growth.

Fourth, schools cannot do it alone.

Educators, business people, community activists, minority and majority leaders, and professionals involved with disadvantaged children must have a willingness to cross longstanding professional and bureaucratic boundaries to provide necessary services. All

resources and talent must be marshalled, and the broadest constituency must be drawn into the process. Building a national effort requires parental involvement, community support, and coordinated social services at the local level that will provide students with counseling and other referrals not available in school and not provided at home.

Using these four concepts, symposium participants attempted to define a national agenda with specific goals and objectives. They considered the leadership required to achieve these goals, the resources available, and the conceptual and organizational framework necessary to coordinate a national program. As a working objective, participants said that the nation should establish what John Porter called "a certainty of opportunity" for minority students. The nation must ensure that all students will succeed in the classroom and will have the skills and opportunity to pursue postsecondary education and prepare for good jobs at decent wages. The primary goal, they said, must be universal high school graduation with a significant increase in the number of students enrolling in and graduating from college.

Opportunity for Change

There are hundreds of valuable projects already underway in communities that could serve as models for broader-scale efforts. They provide interventions at crucial junctures, build confidence, and give disadvantaged students a sense that postsecondary education is possible and will have a payoff. Successful programs respond and adapt to situations particular to their locale. They change as resources change, and accept that, while there is no single model or blueprint that can work in every situation, the success of programs depends largely on factors such as financial support, local enthusiasm, leadership, and dissemination of research. Symposium participants, however, identified several key elements that are necessary for any successful intervention program.

1. Early parent and childhood education. Interventions should begin as early as possible--some say before the child is conceived. Education programs can play an important role in limiting the number of children born with developmental disorders by reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy and emphasizing appropriate prenatal care.

Early childhood education programs must receive public support. One national organization--the Council of Chief State School Officers--unanimously adopted a policy statement in November of 1988 that calls for high quality, publicly supported early childhood and family education programs for at-risk children. The group urges that, at a minimum, such programs should be provided for every at-risk four-year-old in the country.

Two longstanding programs clearly demonstrate the long-term benefits of quality early childhood education for at-risk youth. The Perry Preschool Project, begun by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation of Ypsilanti, Michigan in 1962, and the federal government's Project Head Start, begun in 1965, have had a significant impact on improving academic and social skills.

Students who attended Perry Preschool were significantly less likely to be enrolled in special education programs, be detained or arrested by police, become teen parents, or drop out of high school. They were significantly more likely to have jobs and go to college than were their counterparts in a control group who did not go to preschool.

Students who participated in Head Start performed better on school achievement tests, showed gains in cognitive development, and had fewer special class placements and incidents of being held back a grade. The research also shows that participation in the program is associated with socially mature behavior, lower absenteeism from school, fewer health problems, and has a positive impact on the attitudes of parents toward their children. Unfortunately, Head Start reaches only about 451,000 disadvantaged youth, or 16 percent of the 2.5 million eligible children.

"Minimum-wage workers, single parents, migrant farm people, presidents of corporations share one common belief. They all want to ensure that their children have a better life and an education."

Dallas Martin

2. Parent and guardian involvement. More than any intervention, students benefit from home environments conducive to learning. Assertive parents or guardians can guide them toward postsecondary education programs, encourage them to stay there, and help them find student aid funds from federal, state, and private sources. Most parents of at-risk children want nothing more than for their children to succeed, but they often lack the tools necessary to help them through the education process.

Educators can help parents become more involved in their children's education, but they need to recognize that many parents do not have positive memories of school and may have dropped out themselves. They may not understand the value of education, and may need to be convinced that keeping their children in school will yield positive results for their family and the community. Often, educators have more success reaching parents through churches and other religious organizations, community and social organizations, and through the local media than through the school. Teachers and counselors must go to where parents are and at times when it is easy and convenient for parents.

3. An academic component involving both tutoring and supplemental instruction. Support programs must be steadily available and easily accessible to those who need them. Eugene Lang, for example, established a house in the neighborhood of Harlem's P.S. 121 that serves as a center for peer support, tutoring, and other related activities.

These activities need to take a holistic approach. They should recognize deeply embedded cultural patterns and see children as part of families and parents as part of neighborhoods. Experiential activities are needed that link students to the external community and offer opportunities for service and learning to give them a greater sense of purpose, orient them to the broader world beyond school, and motivate them to work and continue their education.

4. Efforts to build self-esteem and instill a positive attitude towards personal success through education. Effective programs must undermine the popular desire for immediate gratification and, instead, guide students toward long-term career, economic, and social goals. Toward this end, programs should include components that build self-esteem to enable students to see that these goals are attainable.

Russell Edgerton, President of the American Association of Higher Education, noted that students' levels of aspiration and preparation can help determine what types of interventions are most useful. The following model presents four combinations of aspiration and preparedness:

1. Students who have high aspiration and are well-prepared.
2. Students who have high aspiration but who lack preparation.
3. Students who have low aspiration but high preparation.
4. Students who have low aspiration and low preparation.

Students in the first group benefit from programs that specifically provide information on financial aid. As one moves toward the fourth group, he said, it is the "academic boot camp" models that are most successful. Each group requires a different mix of intervention strategies.

5. Mentoring, role model relationships, and other support group interactions. The "mentor relationship" is a common factor among at-risk students who have had success in school. A national program targeting these students should be organized around the concept of empowering an adult to serve as an advocate for each child.

Said Gordon Ambach, Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers and former Commissioner of Education for the State of New York: "Any observer should be able to walk into a school and see that there is one caring professional or adult who has a continuing responsibility for every student over time." With the continued rise in the numbers of non-traditional families, more emphasis must be placed on these mentor relationships since mentors can often assume the role of surrogate parents.

Any national program for at-risk youth must recruit mentors from

inside and outside the classroom and guidance office. School support staff, college students, faculty members, business and community leaders, and the swelling ranks of retired Americans must be enlisted in the effort to find mentors. There are about one million at-risk students. There must be at least one million mentors. Individuals may not be free to provide guidance, information, and support every day, but positive results require persistence, and a commitment over time.

Culturally sensitive educators and community members are the best mentors and role models for minority students. Minority enrollments comprise 40 to 50 percent of enrollments in urban districts and the majority of enrollments in 25 major cities. However, at the current rate, fewer than 5 percent of teachers will be minorities by the year 2000, according to David Imig, Executive Director of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Today, a child goes through 12 years of schooling and experiences, on average, 35 different teachers. Only two of those teachers are from a minority group. In a state such as Alabama, the ratio of white teachers to white students is 1 to 20, while that of black teachers to black students is 1 to 46, Imig said.

For the immediate future, we can expect that the at-risk child, generally, will be taught by a person whose background and experience include little exposure to the special needs of low-income minority students at inner-city schools. We must encourage students from a variety of cultures to pursue careers in teaching, and we must provide support services and information on how to teach effectively in multicultural environments to all teachers.

Howard Gardner, the Harvard psychologist, has identified the need for ombudsmen in schools, for the development of teachers as advocates, and for a new cadre of people to help staff the schools. Every teacher must be trained as an advocate for children and must be taught to balance the compassionate and caring side of the job with the demands of developing basic intellectual skills.

Imig noted that understanding the social baggage students bring to school is a key to helping students but places a tremendous burden on the teacher. The most dedicated teachers work long hours and are in continual contact with parents. New arrangements between school boards and teachers that encourage more personal contact with students and families are urgently needed.

6. Involvement of admissions, financial aid, and other student services staff from postsecondary institutions. Regardless of aspirations and preparation, all students need information about college admissions, financial aid, and career opportunities. Schools and colleges must discover new ways of communicating information and of assessing and meeting the needs of individual students.

Information about preparation for college and vocational or technical programs, curriculum planning, standardized testing, and financial planning helps students make prudent choices and provides them with incentives and milestones for achievement. While this information appears to be widely produced and distributed, it often fails to reach those who need it most. Students are forced to make educational choices based on misleading or untimely information or with a limited awareness of the range of available possibilities.

"Kids don't just go around not knowing about college. They go around not being told about it and not being told it is an option for them. We still think that post-secondary education is for some kinds of kids and not for other kinds of kids."

Reginald Wilson

The major federal longitudinal study of high school students, *High School and Beyond*, has tracked the academic progress of some 30,000 high school sophomores and 28,000 seniors from more than 1,000 high schools since 1980. Findings of the study indicate that there are significant differences between the ways in which minority and white students learn about postsecondary opportunities.

Most minority students learn about college from brochures and materials, if they learn about it all. They go to college nights and fairs and talk to peers. They do not report receiving information from teachers and counselors. In contrast, majority students report that they get most of their information about college from teachers, counselors, and their parents.

Presentation and packaging of informational materials are important. Videos have more appeal and impact for some students than pamphlets and brochures, but all media must be regarded as supplements to, not substitutes for, personal interaction. Research conducted by Jerry S. Davis for the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities indicates that students are more open to interaction with family members, friends, school staff, faculty, mentors and other role models than to reading brochures and other materials.

Moreover, all information must reach students and parents where they are. Teachers and counselors must actively seek out students and parents, and not wait for them to visit the guidance office. The earlier such information is received, the better. Students need time to discuss options with their families, teachers, counselors, and peers.

In many cases, information about the next stage of learning becomes available only *after* a crucial decision is to be made.

College admissions counselors, guidance counselors, and financial aid administrators should play a central role in conveying this information to students and parents. These professionals provide generic information and as much individual time as schedules allow. Many admissions and financial aid administrators spend more time on counseling than any other activity, but are keenly aware of the large groups of students they are unable to reach. Institutional recruitment goals may be multi-faceted, leaving the admissions and financial aid staff with limited time to counsel students of varying backgrounds, interests, and needs.

"It should be an embarrassment to education that people are going outside of education to get services that should be available in the school."

Frank Burtnett

In response to the information needs of college-bound students, a new industry has emerged in recent years. Independent consultants are providing admissions and financial aid information that students and parents feel they are unable to get from the institutions themselves. There is a clear demand for these services, for which individuals may pay up to $1,000.

There are several national projects which have made major efforts to communicate the availability and cost of college. The National Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities created "Paving the Way," a 20-minute video and accompanying brochure designed for the parents of middle school students. More than 1,900 videotapes and 145,000 brochures are in circulation.

Another major national communications effort has been sponsored by the 4,000-member National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC). The group has distributed 1.5 million brochures, including 250,000 in Spanish, detailing what parents need to know early on in order to plan for college. The group also sponsors 24 college fairs that draw some 310,000 high school students and their parents to meet with representatives from 1,400 colleges. The fairs, held in large metropolitan arenas, simulate campus visits for those who do not have resources to go out to schools. NACAC Executive Director Frank Burtnett explained that both urban and suburban students attend the fairs.

In addition, NACAC has introduced a new national program, called Parents and Counselors Together (PACT), that will bring school counselors, educators, and community representatives into direct contact with parents. The program, which targets parents of at-risk elementary and middle school children, consists of four training

modules designed to help parents guide their children toward a full range of educational options. Exemplary projects such as this can help students develop their full educational potential at a time when they most need assistance--*before* they enroll in high school.

Information dissemination should include an honest depiction of the availability of financial aid and the full range of college costs. Generic, uncomplicated materials and programs demonstrating that there is financial aid available for those who need it are the best ways to impart this information to students and parents. Admissions information, course requirements, and the necessary academic preparation for other postsecondary options and careers should be included as well.

7. Guidance about preparation for the next levels of study and affirmation that students can succeed in any learning situation. Once the primary source of college information, counselors are constrained by high student/counselor ratios and endless paperwork, and they must tend to the growing number of social and health problems that students bring to school. Little time is left to adequately assist students with educational and career exploration.

In 1986, there were nearly 70,000 school counselors. This number has not changed since 1976. The shift in counselors from secondary to elementary schools has limited the number of professionals available to work with students on the transition to college, according to Frank Burtnett.

Among their other duties, counselors must advise pregnant students, seek out truants, develop programs to combat drug and alcohol abuse, and compute grade-point averages. Clearly, these are important duties that demand attention, but they keep counselors from focusing on what should be their primary roles--to help students find success in school, to ensure that students are challenged and placed in a competitive environment, and to help students with transitions, Burtnett said. He charged that counselors have been excused from serving students, and that too many counselors are executing programs that existed when they were first hired.

Two reports, the College Board's "Keeping the Options Open" and the National College Counseling Project's "Frontiers of Possibilities," say early intervention efforts by counselors should be central to the mission of counseling and not merely ancillary roles (see **Related Reports**). The reports focus on the "promise of counseling," noting that where sequential and developmental

counseling services are present, the school is a more healthy environment for learning.

The reports urge education schools to change the way counselors are prepared. Current training encourages counselors to be non-directive, empathetic, and warm. Counselors are taught to be listeners rather than advocates for children. Instead, counselors need to combine approaches that encourage creativity on the part of students with practical and concrete information and support. They need to be more available to at-risk students and ready to meet students on their own turf. Burtnett said that few counselor training courses address pre-college guidance or financial assistance. In addition, state requirements for certification rarely, if ever, speak of pre-college guidance and counseling, educational exploration, decision making, or student financial aid.

Given the current workload of today's counselors, many intervention projects and school districts have begun to employ school-based advisors, adjuncts to school counselors who focus specifically on the transition to college. Thus far, these school-based advisors have proven to be the most successful sources of postsecondary education information.

The Cleveland Scholarship Program (CSP), for example, places 21 advisors who serve as adjuncts to high-school guidance counselors in all 19 Cleveland high schools as well as in 16 suburban and parochial schools. The advisors work with students and parents on college selection and help them fill out financial aid forms. Through the years, CSP has served over 35,000 students, provided cash grants of over $6 million, and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to cover test fees, need analysis fees, and application fees. The program, begun in 1967, has helped students receive more than $75 million in scholarships from outside sources.

8. **Evaluation of programs through long-term tracking of participants.** Educators need to document the outcomes of early awareness interventions. Such evaluations are essential for program accountability and continued funding. They also help establish what does and does not work as a means of selecting successful models for public dissemination and implementation. The level and type of evaluation need to be directly linked with program objectives, yet the objectives themselves are difficult to agree upon. Some programs may be designed to increase standardized test scores and increase college enrollments, while other objectives may be more fundamental and value oriented.

The standard yardsticks applied to educational outcomes, including grades, standardized test scores, and matriculation, graduation, and placement rates, are reflective of value systems often assumed to be shared by all. In the case of at-risk students, however, success may need to be defined differently and the assessment process begun earlier. Educational assessments reflect to some extent the degree to which a student fits into an established sequence of events: in high school, the student demonstrates interest in college by taking the requisite courses and showing evidence of learning through grades and test scores. Grades and test scores pave the way for college admission, and performance in college paves the way for a successful transition into the workplace.

Unfortunately, this sequence of events may not occur naturally for the at-risk student. If the decision to drop out of school at age 16 is made at age 11, the assessments that are applied during the high school years are largely irrelevant: they come too late to help the "psychological dropout." Evaluations need to begin earlier, and should focus on levels of aspiration and motivation, interest in planning for the future, and willingness to participate in activities that lead to increased knowledge of educational and career options.

The results of these early evaluations will suggest new techniques for intervention, and lay the foundation for much lengthier studies of program effectiveness. When students who participate in intervention programs in the middle school years get to high school, the standard measures may reveal improvements when compared to assessments of students who do not participate. The intervention continues through high school, and some students will graduate and go on to postsecondary study. Outcomes should reflect the compounded effects of interventions that began at least six years earlier. The intervention process continues through college and should be reflected in career choices and job placements. Each step in the evaluation process reflects events that occurred earlier. The key is to begin the evaluation early, before the sequence of events is interrupted, perhaps irreparably.

The educational sequence can be thought of as a pipeline, and interventions should be created--and tested--at each interval along the education pipeline. Richard Ferguson, President of the American College Testing Program (ACT), identified a model for step-by-step intervention and assessment.

- **Exploration and education.** At this stage, students and parents are given information to assist them in thinking about where the decisions they make in a year or two will lead them in the long term. The type of information, the format in which it is presented, the degree of student and parent receptivity, and the amount of learning are the topics of evaluation.

- **Preparation and planning.** The student must make decisions about course work for 8th and 9th grade that may expand or limit options later on. More fundamentally than course selection, the evaluation effort needs to focus on willingness to formulate a plan and motivation to pursue that plan.

- **Application for postsecondary education.** Students who have varying levels of aspiration and preparation require different kinds of assistance with the application process. Evaluation should examine both the flexibility of the admissions and financial aid application process and the degree to which the student is willing and able to participate in it.

- **Enrollment.** Some students will be admitted but will not enroll. The objective of evaluation here is to examine the factors that intervene in the transition to college, the alternatives that students select over enrollment, and factors that would enhance the possibility of positive choice.

- **Persistence in postsecondary education.** Dropout and "stop-out" rates are only the most obvious assessments. The factors thought to influence retention, including academic and social intervention programs and efforts to improve campus environments, are particularly relevant for students who, six or more years previously, were not considered to be college bound.

- **Graduation and movement into the world of work.** Completion of a postsecondary program and successful entry into the workplace are likely to be the final assessments in the educational pipeline. Despite all efforts, there will be attrition from the pipeline at each stage, and this attrition will appear most pronounced at the end. While it is important to remain optimistic about the potential of early intervention programs, it is equally important to have realistic expectations. Major progress occurs only over a period of many years: there are no short-term solutions, and short-term assessments are inappropriate.

The NASFAA-affiliated early awareness initiative of the Cleveland Scholarship Program includes an extensive evaluation component (see **Related Reports**). The program provides interactions targeted at 250 students in the 8th grade at a predominately minority intermediate school with the major postsecondary institutions in the Cleveland area. College visits and orientations for students, study habit sessions on campus, performing arts programs, career counseling, aptitude testing, computer labs, student mentorships, black aspiration activities, and residence hall overnights are all included in the comprehensive program.

The program will track a class of students through their senior year in high school and possibly their college experience. The class will be dispersed to three senior high schools, and arrangements are being made to continue exposure to postsecondary and financial assistance opportunities for students who originally participated in the program. Retention rates will be compared each year to ascertain progress for participants and non-participants. The tracking will reveal high school dropout rates, graduation rates, and enrollment in postsecondary education for participants. The results will be compared with data on students system-wide. The Cleveland Scholarship Program's evaluation model represents substantial progress in the effort to collect longitudinal data on students who begin the intervention process in the junior high school years.

The need for longitudinal studies is clear, yet society cannot afford to wait for the results before further program development takes place. If the assessment process began with a group of 7th graders in 1989, the final results would not be known until at least 2000. Concerned individuals and organizations, then, must take action immediately, incorporating the elements outlined in this section, and with the understanding that implementing and evaluating early awareness and intervention efforts will require a commitment over time that will surpass those made to most education initiatives to date.

Opportunity to Respond

Coordinating a broad national effort targeting at-risk students will require strong leadership from the White House and Congress, coordination from the states, and support at the grass-roots level. It will demand the kind of volunteer effort that President Bush called for in his Inaugural Address and that First Lady Barbara Bush has promoted in her campaign for national literacy. It will require clearly articulated goals, research and evaluation that demonstrate the effectiveness of programs, and new linkages among schools, postsecondary institutions, the local community, the private sector, and government.

"We must have a national coordinated program with presidential pronouncement initiated state-by-state. [There must be] a compact based upon a national commitment from government, business, and universities that there is a certainty of opportunity for the class of 2001."

John Porter

Leadership, goal-setting, support services, and recordkeeping are needed from campuses. College and university presidents need to hire more minority administrators and faculty at the senior level, evaluate staff on how well they create a multicultural campus environment, provide incentives for faculty and staff to become more involved with local schools, and encourage more minority students to enroll in and graduate from postsecondary education programs.

Superintendents need to develop programs that work in concert with all segments of society, including higher education, business and industry, government, and private and volunteer organizations. They need to increase efforts to identify and assist at-risk populations using new and more appropriate testing, diagnostic, and developmental tools. Curriculum improvements must continue in order to stimulate the interest of students, challenge potential dropouts, and help all students learn to live in and appreciate a multicultural society.

Realizing the value of partnerships and collaborations, symposium participants formulated the following strategies and recommendations for each key player in this process.

EDUCATORS

The segments of the education community must act as a team. Educators at higher levels must begin to view their colleagues at the elementary and secondary levels as equals. All parties, from the public school teacher to the college professor, have a role in the process of educating America's youth.

Elementary and secondary schools must work to improve teaching

and curricula, and provide better information and counseling to enhance minority preparedness for postsecondary education. Meanwhile, colleges and universities must do their share to improve the quality of education in the schools. The relationship among all levels of education is symbiotic. Schools prepare students for higher education; the campuses prepare the nation's teachers.

Early awareness initiatives--and the national goal of ensuring that all students complete high school--provide new opportunities to forge productive linkages and improve communication within the education community. Creating more one-on-one relationships with students and changing the structure of schools, their reward systems, and certification and accreditation standards are among the first areas where cooperation can begin.

Severe divisions within postsecondary education must be mended. Robert Atwell, President of the American Council on Education (ACE), noted that one of the Council's new initiatives will be to deal with what he called "educational apartheid"--the problems of communication between postsecondary institutions and the lack of systematic articulation agreements and transfer procedures.

Financial incentives are among the best ways for educators to convince parents and students that postsecondary education is possible and that hard work in school has rewards. Educators should play a key role in facilitating these efforts. Syracuse University, for example, will pay 100 percent of financial need for local students who receive an 85 or better each year through high school and earn a combined SAT score of 1000 or greater. The public schools and the university, working together, provide mentoring, tutorial, and summer-enrichment programs. The university aggressively markets the program with a media blitz that includes television commercials and direct-mail messages to parents.

Eastern Michigan University established a similar "educational contract" with students in the NASFAA-supported Martin Luther King-Cesar Chávez-Rosa Parks College Days Program (see **Related Reports**). Under the contract, students agree to maintain at least 90 percent school attendance, maintain a progressively higher grade-point-average with a minimum standard that varies from institution to institution, and complete 4 years of mathematics and English, and 2 years of foreign language study and history. In return, they will be granted automatic admission and full-tuition scholarships to Eastern Michigan University, Cleary College, Madonna College, or Washtenaw Community College. Eastern Michigan also provides a

five-week on-campus residential experience for 900 7th-grade students from seven school districts who are identified by teachers as potential dropouts. The university will add 900 new at-risk students each summer over four years.

The effort is funded by $92,000 from the state, $100,000 from the university's general funds, and $48,000 from participating school districts, private donations, and in-kind contributions. The university is establishing a $500,000 endowment to provide additional support services and to help students pay tuition should they enroll. For example, the university, with the help of the State of Michigan Job Corps, wants to provide summer employment opportunities. The Board of Regents pledged $100,000 to the endowment over a five-year period. The university plans to raise $400,000 from the private sector.

Another type of financial incentive was introduced by the Cleveland Public Schools and funded by businesses and foundations. Called "Scholarship in Escrow," the program rewards students with monetary credits for grades achieved in high school. The credit is then paid directly to the postsecondary institution that the student chooses to attend. Students receive $40 for an "A", $20 for a "B", and $10 for a "C." Credits are paid only for grades in college preparatory classes.

Successful programs are often collaborative efforts among public school and college personnel, statewide higher education organizations, community agencies, and service groups. In Boston, for example, the Higher Education Information Center at the Boston Public Library coordinates a variety of activities, taking advantage of in-kind contributions and volunteer effort. Activities are planned and carried out largely by volunteers with technical assistance and organizational support provided by the Center. Public schools provide bus transportation to special events. Local colleges and universities provide student groups visiting their campuses with lunches and tickets to cultural events. Statewide higher education organizations provide informational handouts, and churches and community agencies host workshops, fairs, and other events.

THE COMMUNITY

At the local level, all constituencies--the minority community, parents, counselors, teachers, students, clergy, philanthropists,

business leaders, college officials, civic leaders, and others--must be brought into the process of improving opportunities for at-risk students.

To encourage community involvement, education leaders and policymakers must stress the benefits to all segments of the community. All can rally around the possibility of safer streets, drug-free children, improved intercultural relations, a more competent labor pool, and expanded educational opportunities.

Educators and local leaders must encourage the community to meet the challenge of convincing students that persistence in high school and postsecondary enrollment are worthwhile alternatives to short-term, low-paying jobs or delinquent behavior.

The community must work to ensure that all students complete high school and have competency in basic skills. Programs should promote access to a diverse range of appropriate options upon successful completion of postsecondary education.

Minority organizations--a source of role models--must be drawn into the planning, leadership, and administration of early awareness programs. The NASFAA-affiliated Miami Project, for example, includes on its steering committee representatives from the Urban League, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Educational Center, and ASPIRA of Florida, Inc., along with representatives from the state department of education, higher education, and local banks (see **Related Reports**).

Programs must use community resources and meeting places to reach students and parents. Counselors and teachers must go to churches, community settings, social organizations, offices of the local media, and homes, and schedule meetings at times when it is convenient for parents. Students must be reached in the hallway, in the cafeteria, and in their neighborhoods--not only in the guidance counselor's or vice-principal's office.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Leaders of business and industry, in particular, must be made aware of the importance of reaching students before they drop out of high school. The nation's corporations already pay billions of dollars to train and develop workers. The cost of retraining dropouts is far greater than helping schools prepare students who are ready and able to work and learn.

The business community has pioneered several strategies for improving schools. Adopt-a-school programs, city-wide "compacts," and pre-college mentoring are among the areas where local businesses have lent support to education. But businesses need to openly support additional financial support for schools, including other mechanisms such as higher taxes or lottery revenues. South Carolina businesses, for example, led the movement to raise the sales tax by 1 percent targeted for improvements in education.

Businesses must do a better job communicating successful and innovative programs that may be unfamiliar to educators and the public. They also must promote minorities within their own ranks. Minorities who have been successful in the corporate world attest to the positive outcomes of education.

Educators must continue to enlighten the business community about the importance of educating minority youth. They must also develop evaluation techniques that provide concrete evidence of successful programs to encourage more corporate support and more partnerships between business and higher education.

The Education Commission of the States is establishing a new program similar to ACE's Business-Higher Education Forum that will bring top ranking business leaders together to discuss a range of school/higher education problems. Such forums are a promising beginning. Business and industry are major beneficiaries of the educational process, and their involvement therein is entirely appropriate. Increased communication and collaboration between the private sector and the education community will be required to identify the types of business-education linkages that are most effective and promote them throughout the nation.

Programs frequently championed by the business community include:

- **Adopt-a-school programs.** These programs focus corporate interventions on a particular school. Companies provide money, transportation, staff, equipment, career counseling, and other resources.

- **City-wide "compacts."** The Boston Compact, for example, brings together some 400 Boston-area businesses, 23 colleges and universities, the Boston Public Schools, and the Private Industry Council. These programs bring a significant number of businesses, higher education institutions, and schools together under contractual agreements. Under such agreements, schools

promise to reduce absenteeism and the dropout rate, ensure that graduates pass competency exams, and increase the percentage of graduates pursuing postsecondary education. In return, local businesses agree to give priority to local students when they hire for summer and entry-level positions. Meanwhile, colleges promise to increase scholarship funding and acceptance rates for local students.

- **Pre-college mentoring projects.** Several programs sponsored by businesses create internships in a variety of career fields coupled with support for academic training on campuses. These programs create employment networks for students who do not go on to higher education and valuable laboratory experience and mentorships for minority undergraduate and graduate students. Some programs--such as Washington, D.C.'s Public/Private Partnership Program--provide training for teachers to include business skills in the classroom.

The CHOICES program, sponsored by the U.S. West Education Foundation, brings business people into 8th to 10th grade classrooms in 40 states to increase student awareness of the need for academic achievement as a means toward economic success. The corporate representatives bring the message that the choices students make now will affect the future direction of their lives. Follow-up materials and activities are given to teachers for future use. Seminars have been given in Spanish, Vietnamese, and sign language. Some seminars have even taken place at juvenile correction centers.

GOVERNMENT

While it is "right" and "good" for a democratic society to offer disadvantaged youth expanded educational opportunities, the effort is also clearly in the national interest. Given the slowdown in economic growth and the increasing international focus of the nation's commerce, it is necessary for the one-third of a nation that will be made up of minorities in the near future to be educated as well as their majority counterparts if the labor force is to be competitive.

The role of federal government will inevitably be limited due to budget priorities. But the President and his Secretary of Education should, at minimum, set meaningful goals and establish an adequate database for monitoring the problem and measuring successes. The government must define a set of goals and standards that encourage organizations and individuals to make their own contributions within

the larger framework. It must assume responsibility for releasing more timely and accurate data on high school dropouts and college admissions and graduation rates.

"The amount of funding is not as important as the type of funding. Spending must be leveraged through incentive funding to allow exemplary programs to proliferate at all levels."

Frank Newman

The federal role should center on the use of federal dollars to aid state and local efforts and on the improvement of the existing TRIO programs, including Talent Search, Upward Bound and Educational Opportunity Centers. Symposium participants agreed that any efforts should utilize existing programs funded by TRIO and that this funding should be increased. They called for more flexible regulations and definitions of eligibility to allow the Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, and Upward Bound projects to reach students at earlier grades.

Only about 20 of the 178 federally funded Talent Search projects serve 7th and 8th graders, according to Arnold L. Mitchem, Executive Director of the National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations. The Council says that the five TRIO programs serve 475,000 students but that an estimated 10 million people currently eligible are not being served.

Symposium participants considered reauthorizing existing federal programs to encourage early-awareness efforts. They suggested that a program similar to the State Student Incentive Grant program (SSIG) could be established to distribute funds on a competitive basis to states that create early awareness grant programs.

The federal funding effort would not have to be large. The SSIG program allocates funds to states for the establishment of need-based grant programs for postsecondary students. States must at least equally match the federal allocation. Some states greatly overmatch the federal share. In FY-88, the federal appropriation for SSIG was $72 million and the total pool of need-based aid funds available through state programs was $1.53 billion. A similar matching grant program for early awareness efforts could generate similar multiplication of funds. If states, in turn, imposed a matching fund requirement on local programs, the total money available for early awareness nationwide could total several billion dollars.

Moreover, symposium participants said that the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) could be expanded and used as a vehicle to encourage innovation. They proposed raising FIPSE funding from $13.6 million to $20 million for this purpose. Other sources of federal involvement are the School, College, and University Partnerships Program and the newly

authorized Fund for the Improvement of Schools and Teaching, established by Congress to "improve educational opportunities for and the performance of elementary and secondary school students and teachers."

Federal and state policies must mesh with and reinforce one another. States should interface with TRIO programs. Vermont, for example, provided funds through its state student assistance program to sponsor a statewide Talent Search program before federal funds for Talent Search were available. States also must set goals and standards, and provide support for the development of coordinated, broad-based initiatives through matching grants and endowments.

The Massachusetts Higher Education Assistance Corporation, the state Stafford Student Loan agency, used available reserves from guarantee funds to create a $3 million early awareness and financial aid endowment for the education of urban minority students in the state. The endowment ensures continuity in funding and a long-range approach. Allotments of $1 million each have been established to support ACCESS (a financial aid advising and last-dollar scholarship program), early awareness programs in Boston, and the development of awareness projects across the state.

New York's $378-million Tuition Assistance Program has been injected with new life through the Liberty Scholarship Program, scheduled to begin in 1991. Originally intended to provide money for interventions with 7th graders, the program, when fully funded, will provide $90 million a year to cover non-tuition costs for some 90,000 college students who met GED requirements or graduated from high school in New York. The program will also provide grants to postsecondary institutions that develop partnerships with schools and community agencies to help students stay in school and complete college. The projects will encourage mentoring and academic support activities.

New Jersey and Michigan have established state matching programs. The Michigan legislature gave all 15 four-year public colleges matching grants under the Martin Luther King-Cesar Chávez-Rosa Parks College Days Program. The Michigan incentive grants program to public colleges and universities is a promising model. Such grants should be offered to partnerships involving postsecondary education institutions, businesses, and local school districts. It is hoped that any pool of funds used for grants to partnerships can be supplemented by a private-sector endowment.

Partnerships and other collaborative efforts, then, are essential to ensure that intervention efforts reach the entire population of at-risk students, and to preclude duplicative projects. The broader the constituency invited to participate in programs, the more resources and talent that can be tapped. Increasing student motivation and attainment requires genuine commitment, selflessness, sacrifice, and teamwork, and is too complex a problem for any particular sector to solve on its own. To reiterate the feeling of the symposium participants, schools cannot increase the participation of at-risk groups in education by themselves.

Opportunity for the Future

This report has outlined the needs of at-risk students and suggested changes that need to occur to reverse the current enrollment and participation trends of these students in education. The concern of the symposium participants and the growing national interest in these issues are the seedlings of a broad national effort. Interest, however, will need to be translated into research, and research into a cooperative national action plan that will guarantee every American a certainty of opportunity. The challenge before the nation is not to lower its standards, but to raise them and invite all Americans to be partners.

Dallas Martin noted in his concluding remarks: "Oilmen will say that when you first tap a well, a certain amount of oil gushes up and rises to the surface. That represents a small part of the total energy that can be used. In order to bring up the rest of the oil, you must pump, use replacement drills, and bring in a variety of other tools. The interesting thing about the oil, however, is that whether it is the first gush or the very last drop, once you get it out, it is all valuable. The same is true with our citizens. We must provide the necessary materials and work harder to bring out our untapped reserves."

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Related Reports

One-Third of a Nation, the 1988 report of the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, may be purchased from the American Council on Education for $8 per copy (up to nine copies) or for $7 per copy (10 or more copies). Orders must be prepaid by check or money order (made payable to the American Council on Education) and sent to Publications Department, ACE, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036.

NASFAA Early Awareness Project, the 1988 report on NASFAA's pilot early awareness programs and compendium of early awareness programs in the United States, may be purchased from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators for $7 per copy. Orders must be prepaid by check or money order (made payable to NASFAA) and sent to NASFAA, 1920 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

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Keeping the Options Open, the 1986 report of the Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling appointed by the College Board, which studies the uneven quality that characterizes guidance and counseling services available to high school students today, may be purchased for $6 per copy from the College Board. Orders must be prepaid by check or money order (made payable to the College Board) and sent to College Board Publications, Box 886, New York, New York 10101.

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