LUMINA®
FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION

NEW AGENDA SERIES™

Powerful Partnerships:

Independent Colleges Share High-impact Strategies for Low-income Students' Success

Richard Ekman, Russell Garth and John F. Noonan, Editors

Volume 5 • Number 4 • October 2004

Acknowledgments

The nation's independent colleges and universities contribute significantly to the education of students from lower-income families. The presidents of these institutions, as insightful observers of the range of institutional initiatives critical to success, have been instrumental in this work. Therefore, we thank the 43 busy presidents who offered, from their observation posts, to prepare essys for this volume. We are indebted especially to the 15 presidents invited to contribute chapters.

This volume would not have been possible without the active involvement of an advisory committee, whose deliberations framed the original concept, whose judgments helped to select the 15 presidents invited to submit essays, and whose comments shaped the final documents. The committee's members include:

Larry L. Earvin, president, Huston-Tillotson College
A. lee Fritschler, professor, School of Public Policy, George Mason University
Jamie Merisotis, president, Institute for Higher Education Policy
John F. Noonan, president emeritus, Bloomfield College
Matthew J. Quinn, executive director, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation

Finally, Lumina Foundation for Education not only published this book but also provided essential financial support that enabled presidents and their staffs to gather data and draft the essays.

Richard Ekman, president, Council of Independent Colleges
Russell Garth, executive vice president, Council of Independent Colleges
John F. Noonan, president emeritus, Bloomfield College
Editors

Table of contents

Introduction

Colleges and universities face financial and educational challenges in educating low-income students. The challenges arise not only from the students' more limited financial resources, a situation itself sufficiently daunting, but also from often related factors that affect students' preparation for and motivation to pursue higher education. To address this problem in keeping with America's commitment to egalitarian opportunity, higher education has taken a number of steps over the last half century to level the playing field for individuals and families. Sizable sums of governmental and private money have created a variety of student financial aid programs. A greatly expanded network of community colleges and state universities has reduced the costs associated with distance. To deal with the accompanying issues of motivation and preparation, most higher educational institutions — public and private — have instituted a broad range of outreach initiatives, pre-college programs, developmental courses, and tutoring and study skills classes.

These institutional, state and national efforts unquestionably have helped; every institution in the country can cite inspirational stories of student achievement in the face of significant obstacles. But the overall problem is far from solved. Students from low-income families still do not participate in higher education as often as other students; when they do, they are still not as successful.

Therefore, identifying institutions successful in educating low-income students offers an important opportunity to learn from them. That is the purpose of this volume of essays. Presidents of 15 independent colleges and universities that have had genuine success admitting, sustaining and graduating low-income students reflect on those successes. The authors discuss how their institutions have addressed students' low-income circumstances, but — more important — they also provide insight into methods of reaching and understanding these students and thus shaping environments amenable to their educational goals.

This introductory essay establishes several contexts for these presidential perspectives. First, it sketches the recent re-emergence of this issue on the agenda for higher education and describes this particular volume as a part of that national conversation. It then offers several approaches to the individual essays. After the essays, an epilogue

provides a summary of this type of institution and raises a few key policy implications of this collection of essays.

Back on the agenda

In the past few years, a number of national studies have argued that American higher education — and the various government and philanthropic agencies that support it — substantially should improve education for low-income students. In 2001, the College Board released *Swimming Against the Tide: The Poor in American Higher Education* (Patrick T. Terenzini, Alberto F. Cabrera and Elena M. Bernal). The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (appointed by the United States Congress) prepared *Access Denied: Restoring the Nation's Commitment to Equal Educational Opportunity* (2001) and *Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America* (2002). The papers commissioned by the Advisory Committee were published in *Condition of Access: Higher Education for Lower Income Students* (edited by Donald E. Heller, 2002).

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education released *Measuring Up 2002: The State-By-State Report Card for Higher Education* and *Losing Ground: National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education* (both 2002). Lumina Foundation for Education issued *College Affordability: Overlooked Long-Term Trends and Recent 50-State Patterns* (2000) and *Unequal Opportunity: Disparities in College Access Among the 50 States* (2002). Most recently, the Century Foundation asked a number of experts on these issues to contribute to *America's Untapped Resource: Low-Income Students in Higher Education* (2004).

These reports argue that the recent federal, state and institutional efforts to establish merit-based student financial aid primarily benefit the middle and upper classes and have distracted colleges and universities from the difficult work of enrolling and educating low-income students. Indeed, the first study of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance reported that only 6 percent of students in the lowest income level earn bachelor's degrees; for students in the highest income level, the rate is 40 percent (*Access Denied*, Pages 4-5). These various organizations and authors do not always promote identical solutions. Some stress financial aid; others emphasize the importance of early preparation, college outreach and support services.

Taken together, however, these studies have returned the higher education system's attention to this problem. However, large-scale governmental solutions do not seem likely, particularly given the significant budgetary problems that governments (states in particular) face.

Including independent colleges and universities in the conversation

Some important success stories in educating low-income students take place at small and mid-sized independent institutions. Yet these examples of effective practices are typically either buried in reports of national data or are invisible beyond the spotlight trained on the most selective private universities. Therefore, private institutions' often-remarkable contributions to the education of low-income students routinely are overlooked, and state and federal policy discussions are denied a view of the entire field of play.

For example, Lumina Foundation's *Unequal Opportunity* report concluded, "private four-year colleges generally are the least frequently affordable types of institutions." We did not agree and thus proposed this book of essays as a way to bring to this national conversation a deeper understanding of how private colleges and universities can encourage access to higher education by low-income students and facilitate and their educational achievement.

Together, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and Lumina Foundation asked independent colleges and universities to share their accomplishments in this area. Accordingly, CIC invited college presidents to prepare essays describing their practices and successes in educating low-income students. CIC asked presidents to concentrate when possible on students from

families reporting no more that $25,000 of total income on financial aid applications.[1] From the 43 presidents who expressed interest, CIC invited 15 to prepare essays and asked them to highlight their strategies and results in recruiting and graduating students.

The resulting essays present a series of snapshots — each taken from the vantage point of the president's office — of the range of institutional efforts instrumental in ensuring access and success for low-income students. When successful, such education is complex and multifaceted, usually involving an entire network of attentive campus faculty members and staff, as well as connections beyond the campus. Presidents are uniquely positioned to assess this broad range of mutually reinforcing campus practices. This publication is not, however, a systematic research study that presents cross-institutional data about graduation rates and then provides comparative analyses of the various institutional practices responsible for those results. Perhaps such a study should follow. This volume does, however, provide compelling narratives from institutions that should have a real role in the national discussion.

These essays present a series of **snapshots** — each taken from the vantage point of the president's office — of the range of **institutional efforts** instrumental in ensuring **access and success** for low-income students.

Ingredients of success

These essays provide intriguing views of the ingredients of success. Three such elements that recur in these chapters are worth highlighting at this point: student financial aid, initiatives that focus on particular populations, and some general campus characteristics that increase likelihood of success for low-income students.

1. Meeting financial need

A major ingredient, of course, is dollars. A student's financial situation is the definitional characteristic here, and all of the colleges profiled tackle it directly. First, institutions ensure that students use all relevant government dollars, from Pell and state need-based grants to federal and state educational opportunity program monies. But many institutions also discovered — or raised — funds that could be targeted for these students. The important message of the institutional examples offered here is that student aid is not an assembly-line process. The essays show the colleges' considerable imagination and industry in using a variety of specially targeted aid dollars as well as in raising their own focused funds.

For example, the Alaska Natives served by Alaska Pacific University often have access to tribal council scholarships, employer support and other funds intended exclusively for these populations. However, the university has also been alert to ways in which the federal Community Reinvestment Act, which encourages philanthropic activities from banks, could be used to direct money to their program. St. Edward's University's early use of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) is another example of finding federal funds targeted to a particular group of students.

Importantly, however, a number of these institutions have added institutional money to their work with low-income students. Several have established special scholarship programs using institutional dollars — for example, Merrimack College's Accept the Challenge scholarships and Hampshire College's James Baldwin Scholars Program. St. Edward's University and Heritage University have created special endowments, and Berea College has built a considerable endowment

that, along with its work requirement for all students, enables each student to attend tuition-free. The Berea situation is unusual, but several other institutions (Dillard, Heritage, Claflin and Merrimack) have also intentionally kept their tuitions as low as possible, a sometimes-overlooked option for private college pricing.

Finally, several essays illustrate a genuinely sensitive attention to student financial need. During the admissions process, Dillard University staff work directly with families to reach a mutual understanding of financial feasibility. Heritage University has created an emergency loan fund, food bank and system of promissory notes.

2. Targeting specific populations

Seen broadly, the essays depict two general approaches to educating low-income students effectively. One route is concentration on a particular population of low-income students — for example, migrants or native Alaskans. The other is fine-tuning the college itself by strengthening its capacity to meet the needs of all students. This distinction organizes the essays in this collection. The volume begins with those essays that describe outreach to specific low-income populations and the resulting programs tailored to the subtle dynamics of their learning situations.

Several essays illustrate a genuinely sensitive attention to student financial need.

The first two essays describe institutions that serve two distinct rural populations — St. Edward's University (migrant farm workers) and Alaska Pacific University (native Alaskans). Over 30 years, the St. Edward's College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) has prepared 2,200 students for college through summer residential programs; 60 percent have earned at least a bachelor's degree. The president notes that building partnerships with parents is one key piece of the puzzle in educating first-generation students who have very close family ties. President George Martin introduces a recurring theme in these essays: the importance of finely nuanced programs for individuals from families who have not always found higher education familiar or congenial.

Alaska Pacific's Rural Alaska Natives Program is much newer — it began in 1999 — but early results point to the effectiveness of this high-tech/high-touch distance education program that combines a focus on the leadership needs of rural Alaska with a project-based curriculum that includes a short-term residency and Internet seminars.

Wilson College and the College of St. Catherine paid special attention to single mothers and attained striking results with this group of at-risk undergraduates. Both institutions dedicate spaces in campus residences for single mothers and their children, and both have designed activities especially for them, thus taking the education of "the whole person" to a new level.

Hampshire College maintains cooperative relationships with two community-based organizations 20 miles away in Springfield, Mass. These organizations have successful records of preparing young African-American men through academic skills courses and the GED program, and Hampshire's special one-year transition program has maintained that momentum.

Arcadia University and Merrimack College also have used partnerships — in their cases, with urban schools — to enroll low-income students; both have attained impressive results. At Arcadia's Philadelphia partner, Morris E. Leeds Middle School, fewer than half of the students go on to finish high school. The Leeds students in the Arcadia program, however, have all finished high school, and 90 percent have entered college.

Merrimack College also begins working with students before college. Students in the English as a Second Language program at a nearby high school are admitted to an Accept the Challenge program as high school freshmen or sophomores.

They attend after-school programs two to four days per week and are guaranteed full four-year tuition, room and board scholarships if they are accepted to Merrimack. At Merrimack's partner, Lawrence High School, half of the students drop out before graduating, but all of the students in Merrimack's program have finished high school and have entered college.

Cedar Crest College has focused on low-income women who want to become scientists. The college has learned that offering undergraduates opportunities to engage in scientific research and eventually to supervise the research of younger students increases likelihood of degree completion in science and pursuit of graduate degrees.

Several of the institutions have fashioned academic and campus cultures that support and challenge all students

3. Establishing a supportive academic culture

Several of the institutions — Dillard, Claflin, Berea, Heritage, Notre Dame of Maryland, Mount St. Mary's and Southern Vermont — have fashioned academic and campus cultures that support and challenge all students and have thereby accommodated low-income students without recruiting them in particular. Several presidents point out proudly that their institutions do nothing for low-income students that they do not also do for other students. Indeed, national data indicate that higher percentages of low-income students enroll and graduate from smaller private colleges than from four-year public universities.[2]

In the mid-1990s, two historically black institutions, Dillard University and Claflin University, undertook a difficult type of institutional renewal: raising the quality of the student body while deepening their long-standing commitment to students from the bottom ranks of family income. In both instances, a new president led the college into a bold strategic planning effort that dramatically increased enrollment, applicant quality, scholarships, quality of the physical plant and institutional reputation.

About the same time, Berea College undertook a similarly far-reaching planning effort to increase the retention and graduation rates of its mainly low-income, Southern Appalachian population while increasing the number of African-American students. Berea's success (the number of African-American students doubled from 1996 to 2003) is owed to several factors: the skills students developed through Berea's unique Labor Program, service-learning opportunities, counseling services and the Black Music Ensemble, in which many African-American students participate.

Like Berea, Heritage University's student body overwhelmingly comprises low-income students, especially Native Americans and Hispanics. Significantly, many Heritage staff also represent those populations, thus helping to create a distinctive multicultural atmosphere. Campus architecture, artwork and the curriculum itself also contribute to this environment. Attending to research on student success, Heritage integrated active and collaborative learning as well as emergency loans and child care to students needing those services.

At the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, low-income students earn their degrees at the same rate as other students because of a campus culture that supports students from their first contact with the college. Although no programs are designed expressly for low-income students, the support services are steeped appropriately in respect for personal relationships and in the ethos of a women's college. Of particular interest to readers is the college's equal commitment to supporting and challenging students, regardless of family income.

Like the College of Notre Dame, Mount St. Mary's College attains impressive results with low-income students without designing a program

especially for them. Although the case describes many salient features of Mount St. Mary's work, some readers will be especially interested in the college's teaching methods and other aspects of faculty and staff development, as well as its reliance on a two-year degree to draw minority students into the four-year degree program.

Although Southern Vermont College's campus climate enables students from every economic level to be successful, the college has learned along the way that two programs celebrated in the literature on student success did not work on their campus: a course for freshmen and a peer-mentoring program. Because the college has been successful with at-risk students in other areas, its experiences can inform similar colleges that are considering such programs.

The book's final essay summarizes the efforts of three international institutions that are successfully educating low-income students. This essay reminds us that, despite socioeconomic and political differences, educating low-income students is a worldwide issue. Instead of asking their presidents to prepare full essays, we have included, as an appendix, a brief summary of some work with similar populations.

Richard Ekman, president
Council of Independent Colleges

Russell Garth, executive vice president
Council of Independent Colleges

John F. Noonan, president emeritus
Bloomfield College

St. Edward's University: Migrant students

In 1972, 12 years after the broadcast of Edward R. Murrow's *Harvest of Shame* — a groundbreaking documentary on the plight of migrant farm workers in America — St. Edward's University, a small private university in Austin, Texas, was one of five American colleges chosen to establish a federally funded College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). At the time, college seemed a distant and inaccessible dream for most children of migrant farm workers. Born into lifestyle that seemed almost impossible to escape, they worked long hours in the fields with their parents. Conflicts between school calendars and the harvest schedule severely disrupted their educations. Demands such as these made completing a high school diploma — let alone a college degree — extremely difficult, even though they knew that education could provide an alternative to migrant life.

CAMP aimed to help migrant students break this cycle. Because a student's first year of college is critical to academic success, the program provided migrant students with financial and academic support during their first two semesters. The program was a perfect match for St. Edward's, which was founded by the Congregation of the Holy Cross to

ST. EDWARD'S UNIVERSITY
AUSTIN

Location: Austin, Texas
President: George Martin
Affiliation: Congregation of the Holy Cross
Undergraduate enrollment: 2,530

Summary: The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) recruits migrant farm workers through individual attention to the student and his or her cultural, familial and economic barriers to higher education. CAMP's ongoing support services are responsible for dramatic successes and have improved education for the entire student body.

provide educational opportunities to students of varied cultural, religious, educational and economic backgrounds.

Despite its mission and the best of intentions, however, the university was unprepared for the cultural adjustment required by the sudden influx in 1973 of 70 migrant students, the majority of whom were Hispanic, lived below the povery line, and had little to no experience living in an urban setting. Some of the university's 1,200 students were minorities, and some were economically disadvantaged. However, most were white and middle-class. St. Edward's very quickly realized the need for support services to help migrant students negotiate their new environment and sensitize faculty members and other students to the cultural differences.

So great was the university's commitment to the program and to achieving true diversity that, by 1976, CAMP was generating enormous positive energy on campus. Moreover, by the late 1980s, the Carnegie Institute for the Advancement of Teaching acknowledged the St. Edward's program as a model for serving disadvantaged students. Today, St. Edward's CAMP program is the longest-running program of its kind in the United States. During its 31-year history, the program has provided college access and mentoring to more than 2,200 migrant students through a broad scope of personalized services designed to help them overcome their educational disadvantages and succeed academically.

About 40 freshmen have entered the program every year since 1990. St. Edward's recruits prospective CAMP students by investing in early outreach. With support from the Texas Education Agency and Texas Workforce Commission, the university hosts a seven-week Graduation Enhancement Program (GEP) each summer for migrant students in ninth through twelfth grades. GEP students take classes at St. Edward's for high school credit and work at local government and business offices, earning pay for their time in the classroom and on the job. Meanwhile, career counseling and enrichment activities familiarize the students with the college campus and with CAMP.

The Office of Undergraduate Admission and CAMP staff focus specialized recruiting efforts on more than 30 high schools. Most are in Texas and are served by the Texas Education Agency's Region 13 Educational Service Center; a few are in Florida and other states. The CAMP director and an admission counselor devoted half time to CAMP recruitment work closely with Region 13 staff and participate in the region's migrant student events, including a summer leadership academy. St. Edward's also hosts an on-campus CAMP preview day for Region 13 migrant students and a recruitment-focused reception for CAMP-eligible students and their families in the Rio Grande Valley, home of many CAMP students. The admission counselor visits every targeted high school and helps high school counselors arrange group campus visits for migrant students. These efforts are quite successful; more than 450 migrant students visited St. Edward's to learn more about CAMP in 2002 to 2003.

During its 31-year history, the program has provided college access and mentoring to more than 2,200 migrant students.

Intensifying the personal attention that St. Edward's considers standard in recruiting students helps to minimize socioeconomic and family disadvantages for CAMP students, most of whom are the first in their families to attend college. In a 1990 study of CAMP students at St. Edward's, sociologist John Houghton found that fewer than 40 percent reported two parents born in this country. Their parents' formal education was far below that of the general population; fewer than 15 percent had completed high school.

Students who qualify for CAMP meet the admission requirements of St. Edward's, are U.S.

citizens or legal resident aliens, and demonstrate that migrant or seasonal farm work is their family's primary source of income. The family or student must have performed migrant or seasonal farm work for at least 75 days during the 24 months before applying.

Any CAMP student would name money as the single largest barrier to college attendance. "For most of our lives we grow up helping our families financially by working in the fields, and leaving for college means that there will be one less person helping out," said Jeremìas Alvarez of Presidio, Texas. Alvarez, a 2001 St. Edward's graduate, is now a policy analyst intern with the Federal Farm Credit Administration. "When students hear about the cost of attending college and compare it to the income their parents make, going to college seems almost impossible."

"When students hear about the cost of attending college and compare it to the income their parents make, going to college seems almost impossible."

To overcome financial obstacles, St. Edward's provides each CAMP student with a sizable assistance package. Funded in part by a $361,100 annual federal CAMP grant, this assistance covers tuition, fees, books, living expenses, transportation, health insurance and a modest stipend to offset each student's lost wages. For most CAMP students, the financial assistance package covers all but $2,000 of the total cost of attendance. Students and their families borrow the remaining $2,000 through a federal Stafford Loan or enroll in the university's interest-free payment plan.

Since 1972, St. Edward's financial commitment to CAMP students has grown substantially, whereas the federal CAMP grant has remained relatively constant. CAMP now has a $3.2 million endowment. Between 1990 and 1999, the average university-funded CAMP grant grew by more than 250 percent, from $5,400 to $13,675. In the 2003-2004 academic year, the typical CAMP grant from St. Edward's increased to $14,100.

The university pledges that no CAMP student will have to leave St. Edward's for financial reasons. After a student completes the two-semester program, the university guarantees three additional years of institutional grants if the student maintains satisfactory academic progress. Moreover, CAMP staff members help students identify and apply for scholarships from corporations, foundations and other private sources to meet their continuing education costs. For example, CAMP student Brenda Cornejo from Eagle Pass, Texas, received the 2002 Migrant Farmworker Baccalaureate Scholarship from the Boces (formerly Geneseo) Migrant Center in New York. Based on academic merit, the grant provides up to $20,000 and also can fund graduate study. Only one award is given annually; three of the last five honorees have been St. Edward's University students.

Many CAMP students support their own education and simultaneously give back to the community through the university's Community Mentor Program (CMP), in which St. Edward's students — about two-thirds of them CAMP students — mentor more than 350 schoolchildren from the Austin Independent School District. Paid through the AmeriCorps program, each mentor earns an education award of $3,375 for 450 hours of service per year. Each mentor also receives a post-service award that can apply to student loan payments or to graduate study. In 1992, CMP was named a National Model Program for Learn and Serve America and AmeriCorps, both divisions of the Corporation for National and Community Service. President Clinton bestowed the Hispanic Heritage Education Award on CMP and the Austin Independent School District in 1996.

Academic and social support programs are vital components of CAMP. Adjusting to college life is a

formidable challenge. Because migrant students lack the role models typically available to their better-off peers for negotiating the broad range of academic and social issues of campus life, the university begins to address these issues immediately — during CAMP orientation weekend in the August before the fall semester begins. The information sessions, workshops, panel discussions and social gatherings enable incoming CAMP students to meet one another, interact with former CAMP students who are continuing their education at St. Edward's and meet university faculty and staff members. Parents also attend and meet parents of former CAMP students, who offer reassurance and advice about their children's new lives. Parental involvement builds family support for the student's education.

During their academic journeys, CAMP students benefit from ongoing counseling and advising. To help students succeed, the CAMP staff members set high standards and use strategies especially applicable to CAMP students' needs and strengths. The staff translates the strong work ethic students developed in the migrant fields into a formula for academic success. In the staff-led Migrant Experience Group, students meet weekly to discuss transitional issues and explore ways to resolve the guilt many feel for enjoying a privileged lifestyle while their families toil in the fields. One-on-one assistance helps CAMP students assess academic and career options. The program requires at least three tutoring sessions per week.

At the encouragement of CAMP staff members, students engage in activities from the student newspaper to student government, the university programming board to campus ministry. Recently, CAMP students formed a Mariachi group and Ballet Folklórico troupe to celebrate their cultural heritage with the rest of the campus community.

Such comprehensive support continually succeeds. By graduation, the CAMP students' academic performance compares with that of other St. Edward's undergraduates; the collective GPA of CAMP students in the past five graduating classes was virtually identical to that of their peers.

The success of CAMP support services has shaped the ways in which St. Edward's provides services — especially tutoring and academic skills development — to its entire student body. For example, the university's Freshman Experience course borrows from CAMP to help new students adjust to the demands of college life. Moreover, the CAMP personalization of the university experience now extends to all freshmen. Its philosophy has helped distinguish a St. Edward's education through its hands-on liberal arts program specifically customized for each student. In recognition of this program's achievements, St. Edward's was selected in Fall 2003 as one of 12 Council of Independent Colleges Founding Institutions for the national project Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year.

John Houghton's 1990 study of CAMP graduates described an escape from the deprivation of migrant life and movement into the middle class. Houghton's sample revealed a remarkably high level of educational and occupational success for CAMP alumni who graduated between 1972 and 1989. He reported, "They have virtually leapt to educational, occupational and income status ... higher than expected given their origins, [and they] surpass the attainments of those of similar age and education in the general population. Thus, in these instances, CAMP and St. Edward's have contributed to an extraordinary case of upward social mobility."

In Houghton's sample, 57.7 percent held bachelor's degrees; 4.9 percent held master's

The collective GPA of CAMP students in the past five graduating classes was virtually identical to that of their peers.

degrees; and 4.1 percent held professional degrees. Seventy-nine percent were working full time outside the home, and 13.7 percent were enrolled in graduate school. More than 49 percent were engaged in professional services, and 33 percent held jobs in public administration. Participants credited the effective program and supportive institutional environment.

Retention and graduation rates for CAMP students are exceptional. In the 1990s, 92 percent of CAMP students completed the freshman year, and retention to the sophomore year averaged 73 percent. The rates have improved during the last three academic years; first-year completion during that period ranged from 97 percent to 100 percent, and sophomore retention ranged from 73 percent to 86 percent. All of the 36 CAMP members of the 2002-2003 CAMP class completed their freshman year. All but two students planned to return to St. Edward's; those two transferred to universities nearer to their homes.

Between 1986 and 1997, 52 percent of CAMP students graduated from St. Edward's or from another university. This rate of bachelor's degree attainment dramatically exceeds the 6 percent rate described for students from the lowest socioeconomic stratum in a 2001 study by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (*Access Denied*, Pages 4-5). It also exceeds the four- and six-year graduation rates — 27.7 percent and 45.9 percent, respectively — reported for all Hispanic students at peer private institutions in the Consortium for Student Retention and Data Exchange.

The statistics are impressive, but the real story is the individual achievements of the students themselves. For more than three decades, CAMP has been an educational starting point for doctors, teachers, scientists, politicians, parents and community activists. CAMP student Geronimo Rodriguez graduated from St. Edward's in 1990 and the University of Texas School of Law in 1996, worked for the Clinton administration and is now a partner at an Austin law firm. He summed up the CAMP experience this way: "It's important to remind people that if you give us the right opportunities, we can excel like anybody else."

For more than three decades, CAMP has been an educational starting point for doctors, teachers, scientists, politicians, parents and community activists.

Queta Cortez's CAMP experience made history. She came to St. Edward's through CAMP, never having set foot in a science laboratory. She graduated from St. Edward's, enrolled at Texas A&M University and became the first Hispanic woman in Texas to earn a Ph.D. in physical chemistry.

CAMP even prepares students to triumph over the most extraordinary of life's challenges. Maria Gallegos Ramirez, a CAMP student who had to leave St. Edward's after being diagnosed with a brain tumor during her sophomore year, found herself after recovery back in the migrant fields. Determined to break the cycle of poverty in her family, she enrolled in another college to complete her bachelor's degree. She then earned a master's degree and became a teacher. In 1996, she was named Colorado's bilingual teacher of the year and later was named national bilingual teacher of the year.

CAMP students reinforce the Holy Cross values that guide the university: social justice, equal opportunity and the rewards of hard work. Associate Professor Anne Crane in the School of Humanities spoke for many at St. Edward's when she said, "My experiences with CAMP students have been so personally rewarding that it would take some time to summarize or give examples. The students have always been focused and dedicated to doing well. It has impressed me that

so many CAMP students over the years have believed that, although it is important to succeed individually, it is equally important to contribute to improving things for others — family, friends, society."

CAMP students (and their families) make great sacrifices to pursue higher education at St. Edward's. The process transforms them. The poverty and limited opportunities of their childhoods become economically and socially distant for nearly all of them. As full participants in the St. Edward's educational experience, they enrich the university's learning community through personal interactions in which they and other students develop a broader understanding of America's shared cultural heritages.

The success of CAMP is testimony to the combined power of a supportive faculty and administration, generous university funding and each student's will to succeed. CAMP at St. Edward's stands as evidence that a well-designed and caringly executed educational program can help students excel despite seemingly insurmountable childhood barriers to individual achievement.

George Martin, president
St. Edward's University

Alaska Pacific University: Rural Alaska Native Adult program

The Rural Alaska Native Adult program (RANA) at Alaska Pacific University is a distance education program directed specifically toward adult tribal Alaska Natives who live in towns and villages accessible only by plane. Many villages are 300 to 800 miles off the highway. The curriculum focuses on two careers available in rural Alaska: business and education. RANA offers undergraduate degrees in organizational management (OM) and K-8 education. The students are mid-career adults whose lack of a degree limits their career opportunities. Typically, OM students are low- to middle-management employees. K-8 education students are usually paraprofessionals; occasionally they are administrative employees seeking teacher certification.

The student body comprises low-income working adults. Half are eligible for Pell Grants. Air shipping costs dramatically affect the cost of living in rural Alaska. Gasoline costs $3 to $4 a gallon; food prices are triple those in the lower 48 states. Bleach can cost as much as $60 a gallon because it is considered a hazardous material. The hospital, a pharmacy or a movie theater may be a plane ride away. Many Alaska Natives — even

Location: Anchorage, Alaska
President: Douglas North
Undergraduate enrollment: *673*

Summary: The Rural Alaska Native Adult program at Alaska Pacific University offers distance-learning degree programs in organizational management and K-8 education to Alaskans whose remote rural locations might otherwise render higher education inaccessible. The program benefits not only the students but also the communities to which most of them return as leaders in business and education.

those who live in villages or towns — subsist on hunting and fishing. These factors make income level an inaccurate description of financial status. Cost of living and large family size place many RANA students into the low-income category. However, significant sources of financial aid for higher education — from Tribal Council scholarships, employer support and other scholarships directed exclusively toward Alaska Natives — distinguish them from other low-income groups.

Tuition in 2002-2003 was about $6,200; other costs included at least $1,600 for books, fees and two short-term residencies. Additional transportation costs vary considerably by the location of the home village but can reach as much as $750 per round trip. Many students live with relatives during their residency in Anchorage to reduce room and board costs. By and large, RANA students can meet these costs without assistance from Alaska Pacific University. However, a new donation offers assistance for travel and residency costs.

Yup'pick (yoo pick) was a typical RANA student. She has worked as an administrative assistant at a one-school school district in the village of Chevak (chee'vak), 130 miles northwest of Bethel, for 14 years. Like 99 percent of Alaska, no road leads to Bethel or Chevak. Yup'pick, a native speaker of the Cup'ik (choo' pick) dialect, is married with four children, ages 7 to 11, and hers is the family's primary income. She admires teachers' contribution to her community and dreamed of becoming a teacher, but moving her family to live near a university was impossible. RANA offered a way to fulfill her dream: She could continue in her present job while earning a B.A. and certification in K-8 education. After graduation she intends to stay in her current school district or to move to her husband's home village. In either case, she will teach in the immense delta area formed by the Yukon and Kuskoquim rivers as they empty into the Bering Sea.

Yup'pick has a Pell Grant, support from her school, a scholarship from the Association of Village Council Presidents and a few other sources of funding. She attends RANA by paying about $2,000 in transportation and residency costs herself. She hopes to get a forgivable Teacher Education Loan to cover those expenses. As with most RANA students, she brought previous credits (in her case, 30) earned in a community college.

> Yup'pick wants to bring parents and families into their children's educational process.

Asked about her motivation and goals, she says that the higher salary a certified teacher gets is important but not what first came to her mind. She primarily wants to help her community — especially the children. She sees the village "losing its language, losing its ways" and is concerned that the children's teachers — certified in the lower 48 states — do not know the culture and come and go every two or three years. A Native herself, Yup'pick wants to bring parents and families into their children's educational process. She wants to serve as a personal example to students — "See, I am the teacher, and I am from Chevak" — and to prepare them for life in Alaska and beyond, "so they can choose."

Yup'pick has completed her second semester and has earned 24 credits. Soon she will have her associate's degree and will continue on to the B.A. Her confidence grows weekly. She says that, at first, her "heart was going thump, thump" as she learned to use the computer to take courses, but now she is very comfortable with it and has done well in a course about computers in the classroom. A classroom management course has added different techniques to her repertoire. She has taken both beginning and intermediate algebra and feels well prepared to teach K-8 math. Her advisers and teachers have been in close contact with her every step of the way.

For Yup'pick and her student colleagues, RANA offers more than increased earning power and social mobility. It empowers Alaska Natives by enabling them to gain the qualifications to take on leadership positions. The social need for RANA is clear: The rural villages and towns populated by Alaska Natives are fighting for economic and cultural survival. Downturns in fishing, timber, mining and trapping have dramatically weakened the natural resource economy. Other forces are disintegrating Tlingit, Haida, Athabascan, Aleutiq, Yup'ik, and Inupiat communities as well. These forces include lack of jobs, alcohol and inhalant abuse, domestic violence and sexual abuse, inadequate public school education, welfare dependency, language loss, cultural incursions such as TV and the Internet, and emigration to the city (Anchorage) or out of the state.

Rural Alaska has always depended heavily on outside leadership. The story is perhaps most telling in the field of K-8 and secondary education, one of the mainstays of the rural service economy. Only 9 percent of the certified teachers in rural Alaska are Alaska Native, although Natives represent 85 percent of the population. Most of the certified teachers are hired from the lower 48 states or from urban Alaska, and they have high annual turnover rates: 70 percent in 1999. Meanwhile, underpaid Alaska Native paraprofessional teacher aides must provide the continuity that would otherwise be lacking. Similar situations exist in other sectors of the economy. RANA enhances Native Alaskan retention and completion rates and seeks to develop locally based leadership in business and in education.

After three years of design and development, RANA opened and was accredited in 1999, the only distance education program in the nation designed specifically for an ethnic minority.

Only 9 percent of the certified teachers in rural Alaska are Alaska Native, although Natives represent 85 percent of the population.

Although RANA is open to any rural resident, 92 percent of its students are Native Alaskan; the program thus shares the power-in-community of tribal colleges. RANA recognizes Native Alaskans' need for community and group support in higher education. The six-year completion rate for Alaska Natives attending all higher education institutions, in and out of Alaska, was only 6 percent in 1999. The completion rate in the three years that RANA has been operating, however, projects a 40 percent six-year completion rate. Thus far, 60 percent of the students who have enrolled in RANA have graduated or are still enrolled.

The program has not been without its growing (and shrinking) pains. Its first director left the state after two years; the program managed with various internal directors for about 18 months. The new director began in Fall 2003.

Student interaction with faculty, the flexibility of the model, and the community ethic of the program contribute to RANA's high completion rate. Short-term residencies on the Alaska Pacific campus during the first week of each semester establish a sense of community in RANA. Students come to Anchorage from all over rural Alaska and begin their courses face-to-face. A simulation lab shows new students the interactive class format called the Internet Seminar. In this seminar, real-time chat rooms allow students to receive assignments, share work, and discuss materials. Students also correspond with faculty to obtain written responses to assignments. When the students return to their homes after the residency, all of their courses continue — same teachers, same students. RANA thus avoids the isolation of the distance learner by creating a supportive community of learners.

Two educational features make RANA especially valuable as a leadership program for

rural Alaska. Project-based learning goes beyond mere theory in action projects that showcase students' new abilities in the classroom or in management. As with every undergraduate program at APU, study culminates in a senior project, in which the student conceptualizes an action project, plans it, carries it out, evaluates the results, and then presents it to the faculty and other students. Active, project-based education is empowering; it fosters the leadership attitudes and skills prized by RANA and vital in rural Alaska.

Second, the curriculum is designed to be relevant to the needs of rural Alaska and to produce leaders with the appropriate skills to address those needs. For instance, RANA welcomed a group of mid-career professionals from nonprofit organizations into the organizational management major in Fall 2003. APU collaborated with the Foraker Group, an Anchorage organization that advises and trains nonprofit organizations to develop a course on nonprofit management. Graduation from RANA will qualify these rural Alaskans to move into positions of greater leadership in their communities' nonprofit organizations, which are essential to the rural economy.

Another opportunity to customize the curriculum to rural Alaskans is the K-8 science methods course. Many textbooks and materials exist for teaching science in the elementary classroom, but the course must also address the challenge of introducing science to students raised in Native Alaska culture. One might argue that a curriculum tailored to rural Alaskans is limiting — a criticism also made of African-American and Latino studies. However, educating only from the mainstream invites another kind of limitation, one that is painfully evident when teachers from outside struggle to teach in rural Alaska.

In summary, RANA combines a high-touch, short-term residency with high-tech Internet seminars designed to succeed with rural Alaskans where impersonal, "generic" distance education models have failed. By basing the 12-student courses in interactive e-mail discussions, problem-solving and reporting, the program has produced some side benefits:

- Writing abilities have improved significantly through intensive practice.
- The asynchronous time pattern of e-mail replicates the Native pattern — *listen, reflect, respond* — thus providing a more familiar communication style.
- RANA students have become proficient with information technologies and networked problem-solving.
- RANA is creating a cadre of networked peer adult leaders in dispersed and different tribal communities.

What is RANA's future? Thanks to RANA's success, the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges' has accredited Alaska Pacific University to offer any of its degree programs in the RANA distance format as long as that move is approved by the faculty and administrative process. A new MBA program in this same format will be offered in two years.

> Creating a **distinct program** for a **distinct population,** as we have done, has made it attractive to funders.

What advice can we offer other colleges? Creating a distinct program for a distinct population, as we have done, has made it attractive to funders, who responded warmly in the start-up phase to its distinctiveness. Seed money is very important; the RANA program relied on a substantial investment in information technology and personnel made possible by the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust and General Communications, Inc. (GCI). The Murdock Trust, like many private foundations, was interested in the positive impact higher education can have on an important regional problem. GCI, a local

telecommunications and Internet service provider, wanted to lead Alaska in providing educational services through the Internet. RANA met the needs of both.

Although private and public funders like to initiate programs, they are reluctant to sustain them. They want to help get a good idea to its feet, but they expect it to be self-sufficient. Any new program that is going to have a lasting impact on a low-income constituency must be a sustained effort; therefore, a university must carefully consider whether it can sustain the program after the seed money is spent.

Private colleges and universities seeking outside funding for low-income students should remember one important piece of Congressional legislation: the 1977 Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). The law requires regular evaluations to determine whether banks comply with the lending test, the investment test, and — most important to the university's development office — the service test. Services include philanthropy. Banks seeking an improved CRA rating have a corporate motive to direct their philanthropy toward colleges that serve low-income communities because such philanthropy gives evidence of service in a rating process that Kenneth Thomas (2000) calls "alarmingly subjective." In other words, CRA ratings can be enhanced when financial institutions support dramatic, compelling programs. Several of those institutions have selected RANA.

Another important source of financial support for low-income students is the loan-forgiveness programs for teachers. These programs forgive all or part of teachers' student loans over time if they teach in critically disadvantaged school districts. For instance, the RANA program offers a B.A. in K-8 education. Almost all of the students are paraprofessionals who plan to work in schools and districts that qualify for cancellation or forgiveness programs. RANA students whose loans are made through the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education qualify for full loan forgiveness over five years.

The RANA program is an educationally and financially successful attempt to bring higher education to students who could not ordinarily attend for both geographic and economic reasons. Because it is in roadless Alaska and is directed toward a particular constituency, some features may not apply elsewhere. I nonetheless hope that the program and its story are relevant wherever small, private universities and colleges strive to do their part in addressing social ills. Our institutions contribute uniquely by offering forms of education that transform students and prepare them for leadership. Colleges and universities like ours do much more than offer credits adding up to a credential. We provide the smaller class sizes, the personal attention, the encouragement and the caring that low-income and underserved populations need most as they aspire to leadership in our society.

Douglas North, president
Alaska Pacific University

Wilson College: Single mothers with children

Location: Chambersburg, Pa.
President: Lorna Edmundson
Affiliation: Presbyterian, women's college
Undergraduate enrollment: 700

Summary: Wilson College's Women with Children Program allows single mothers to complete their educations and participate fully in campus life by providing on-campus housing for them and their children. Its successes have offered guidance to other programs that emulate it.

After more than 30 years in education, I often have looked into the faces of single mothers who were struggling to subsist on their fragile arrangements for meals, housing, transportation, child care and schooling. Few of these mothers had the time, energy or money to consider — let alone pursue — their own educations.

These households headed by single women faced essentially the same difficulties, whether they lived in urban Roxbury, Mass., rural Warner, N.H., or suburban Chappaqua, N.Y. Even in Paris and Algiers, I met mothers of all ages who were suddenly thrown into dire economic circumstances by divorce or the death of a spouse. Many chose poverty over abusive marriages.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, these women represent all ages, races, religions and cultural backgrounds. They share the responsibility for raising children alone in societies that still seriously limit the quality of life for women and the poor. Too often the result is successive generations of declining aspirations, low levels of education and marginal existence. We also know that the cost of sustaining poor families on welfare far exceeds the cost of educating them. Psychiatric services and prisons are costly. Furthermore, poverty breeds despair and violence.

The statistics are alarming. The divorce rate is 50 percent in America, and more than 33 percent of all children are born to single parents. Approximately 40 percent of American women can expect to be single mothers during their lifetimes; nearly 80 percent of single parents are women; the poorest families are those headed by women with children under the age of 18.

Families and friends will help some of these women cope, care for their children, pursue their educations and find fulfilling employment. The overwhelming majority, however, will remain poor and will struggle to provide for their children's well-being. Most will set aside forever their own aspirations. Their children will continue the downward spiral. Ironically, our current welfare-to-work requirements discourage those who manage to hold on to high educational aspirations: A technical or two-year college degree counts toward the work requirement, but a four-year degree does not.

> "Living in a residence hall with other mothers has given me an extended family. I now have sisters, and my son has siblings. It has been a wonderful lesson in sharing, compromise, empathy, understanding and open-mindedness. These are valuable lessons that may have been harder to teach my son had we not lived here on campus."
>
> — Laura Thomas '03

More than 35 years ago, during the community school movement in Boston, I began to see poverty's intractability and to understand education's promise. I hailed from a segregated, lower-middle-class, racist and sexist New England mill town in the 1950s, but my political instincts counteracted my personal experience. I decided to seek positions that could increase educational access and equity, such as Head Start and Reach Up. Later, I helped establish the Women's Institute in Paris and programs that opened Columbia University's doors to older women and their families by offering assertiveness training, child-care centers, career development and internships.

In 2001, I became Wilson's 18th president. Like most institutions today, Wilson educates many single parents from a wide range of backgrounds. As one of the 61 women's colleges in the United States, Wilson has been an important player in raising the aspirations and educational levels of women — married and single — since its founding in 1869.

At Wilson, I saw for the first time a comprehensive and systemic program for single mothers. Mothers live with their children in campus residences that offer child-care services day and night. Each family has a two-room suite with a private bathroom and shares a kitchen with the six other families who live on the same floor. Playgrounds and picnic tables are just outside the door. An endowment funds program support and child care. An alumnae mentor program, life skills workshops, meal plans for mothers and children, opportunities to become fully integrated into campus life and postgraduate transition services also distinguish the program.

Consider how such a program simplifies life for a single mother. Home and college are one. Fellow students become family — around the clock, if necessary. Other students who have siblings but no children are eager to volunteer as baby sitters. The

classrooms and dining room are a two-minute, stroller-friendly walk from the residences.

Pennsylvania's first lady cut the ribbon in 1996 at this award-winning program's opening. It soon attracted widespread attention as its success in educating and graduating single mothers with young children became known. Major gifts came from the Eden Hall Foundation, the Whitaker Foundation, the Conrad Hilton Foundation and the Marguerite and Gerald Lenfest Endowment. Sen. Arlen Specter facilitated a Congressional appropriation. In 1999, The National Student Affairs Association identified Wilson's Women with Children Program as one of seven exemplary programs in the country.

Gifts and awards are impressive, but even more moving was an experience I had on a warm August morning in 2001, shortly after I became president. On my way from the President's House to my office, I walked by Prentis Hall, where the mothers and children live. Two little girls were writing on a large banner with crayon and chalk.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

The smaller child smiled and said, "Well, tomorrow a lot of new kids are coming to Wilson, and they don't know how to go to college, but we do! So we're making a sign so they'll come over here, and then we'll tell them how to do it!" The older child nodded.

I watched for a few more moments. Here were 7- and 10-year-old children for whom college was already a natural way of life. They had learned that knowing how to go to college is a significant accomplishment, and they were eager to pass their wisdom on to others.

Who are the Wilson student-mothers? All have family incomes under $25,000. They are single — separated, divorced or widowed — and range from 18 to 38 years of age. They are first-generation college students; a few are the daughters of professional parents. Before coming to Wilson they were working women, homemakers or welfare recipients. They come from large cities, suburban neighborhoods and rural communities. They are Caucasian, Hispanic, African-American and Asian-American.

They are mothers of one, two or three children: from infants to teenagers. They are dean's list students; Wilson Curran Scholars; student leaders; residential advisers; peer teachers and tutors; dancers; singers; artists; athletes; volunteers for Habitat for Humanity and members of Wilson College's search, planning and governance committees.

Who are the Wilson student-mothers? All have family incomes under $25,000. They are single — separated, divorced or widowed — and range from 18 to 38 years of age.

They major in political science, history, Spanish, environmental studies, education, mathematics, business, biology, sociology. They hope to be teachers, physicians, scientists, lawyers, business owners, dancers, writers, community leaders.

In fact, they are like other Wilson students, except they are raising children by themselves while completing their baccalaureate degrees. They all want to be good parents, participate fully in campus life and complete their education.

A few Wilson Women With Children:

■ **Cassandra, '04**, a 34-year-old African-American single mother from Columbia, Md., has a cumulative 3.9 GPA and a very long list of honors, awards and leadership experiences. Soon after coming to Wilson, I was struck by how articulate she was and by the warm, respectful relationship she has with her daughter and with the faculty, staff and other students. Watching her and her 8-year-old

daughter participate in the French and Spanish language table discussions or read poems in Spanish at a Wilson Poetry Reading is edifying.

Cassandra serves on the college-wide Strategic Planning Committee and is project coordinator for the Wilson College Interpretive Trail, co-founder of the Wilson College Literacy Program and a peer teacher in the First-Year Student Seminar Program. This fall, she will participate in the International Women's Conference on Women in the 21st Century, in Havana, Cuba.

Cassandra explained, "I chose to come to Wilson because it provided an option for me to complete my undergraduate education while taking care of my daughter. Children benefit from a stable home environment and exposure to activities that expand their minds. Wilson has given (my daughter) a chance to interact and befriend Japanese and Korean students and participate in an interactive biology lab tour. In my daughter's own words, 'Wilson is great because you get to go to everything and learn about the community.' "

> "I came back to college kicking and screaming but found at Wilson an encouraging and supportive atmosphere. The women half my age accepted me; they made me feel like one of them."
>
> — April '04

■ **Jessica, '05**, a Caucasian student from Butler, Pa., came to Wilson at 17, after her pregnancy. Her shyness belies her strength and tenacity. While raising her 2-year-old daughter and pursuing a degree in mass communications, she also serves as project leader of the Wilson College Literacy Project, entertainment editor of the Wilson College newspaper and staff writer at the local newspaper. She is also residential adviser to all 24 women in Prentis Hall and has made great progress in improving communication and services.

Jessica stated: "Not only has the Women with Children program given me the opportunity to continue my education, but it has helped my daughter become inquisitive and able to express herself very clearly. I have confidence that my daughter will someday be in my shoes, pursuing her dreams for an education and finding her place in the professional world."

■ **April, '04**, a 36-year-old divorced mother of three children under 10, had a 10-year plan to earn her degree before she learned about Wilson's program.

"I came back to college kicking and screaming," she said, "but found at Wilson an encouraging and supportive atmosphere. The women half my age accepted me; they made me feel like one of them. The Wilson Honor Principle holds everyone to a high standard. I found I could still succeed academically, and within six months, I had resurrected my childhood dreams to become a doctor."

April is president of the Wilson College Government Association, a faculty-student governance organization and, as a Curran scholar, gives 260 hours of volunteer service each year. She has been the team leader for Habitat for Humanity, coordinator of Operation Christmas Child and a peer tutor. She serves as the resident assistant for mothers with infants in the Women with Children Program. She intends to go to medical school.

■ **Adefunke, '04**, born in Nigeria, is a 30-year-old mother of a 4-year-old daughter. Planning a legal career, she is a residential adviser, a member of the choir, the African-American Student Union and a participant in the alumnae mentor program. At the June 2003 international conference on Empowering Future Women Leaders in a Changing World — where Wilson's Women with Children Program

was highlighted — Adefunke spoke of the importance of her relationship with alumna Mary Kimmel, Wilson Class of 1991, herself a single mother:

"She met with me to talk about my hopes, gave me practical advice and called me often, just to see how I was doing. I said to myself: 'If she can call me, I can call her and see how she's doing. If she can raise a family and have a career, so can I.' My daughter also takes care of me sometimes. She seems to know when to shoo her little friends out of our apartment, saying: 'You have to go home now. My Mommy and I have to study.' "

Nicole, '03, is a young woman whose boyfriend refused to help when he learned that she was pregnant, and her parents decided to exercise "tough love" by turning her out of their home. She lived for a time in a home for unwed mothers and seriously considered placing her daughter for adoption. A counselor at the Catholic home for unwed mothers where she lived told her about the Wilson program and helped her apply. She earned a degree in sociology and dance and was a member of the choir and the dance company. Her daughter, who sometimes performed with her mother, once shared an ice cream cone with visitors and turned them into major benefactors of the Women with Children Program. "My daughter graduated with me," Nicole said. At Wilson, the children, wearing miniature caps and gowns, accompany their mothers at commencement.

> "My daughter also takes care of me sometimes. She seems to know when to shoo her little friends out of our apartment, saying: 'You have to go home now. My mommy and I have to study.' "
>
> — Adefunke '04

Since the Women with Children Program began in 1996, 50 families have participated, and 13 student-mothers have graduated. All are employed in positions with a future. They work as teachers, office managers, sales people, executive assistants and more.

In 2003 the program expanded from 24 to 32 families, including nearly 40 children. Long-range plans call for the program to house 60 families.

I have been most impressed by the 82 percent persistence rate of the student-mothers and by the 33 percent named to the dean's list. I am also impressed by the sight of high chairs in the dining hall; tricycles on the walkways; and children accompanying their mothers to the library, to poetry readings, to performances and to chapel services, making Wilson College a community of all ages.

Through its National Center for Single Mothers in Higher Education, Wilson College now offers networking and consultation to students, practitioners and institutions who wish to adopt our model. The College of Saint Mary in Omaha, Neb., and College Misericordia in Dallas, Pa., are two such colleges. We have also offered guidance through a June 2003 international conference, Empowering Future Women Leaders in a Changing World, which drew educators, policy-makers, researchers, students, advocacy groups and legislators from the United States and from Lithuania, Canada, Japan and Ghana. Former Ambassador to Switzerland and former governor of Vermont Madeleine Kunin gave an inspiring keynote address. Three other college presidents and a scholar from the Wellesley Center for Research on Women have accepted my invitation to collaborate on a project to disseminate information about our programs for single mothers. Wilson recently has

signed several articulation and dual-enrollment agreements with two-year colleges. These agreements will facilitate transfer to the Women with Children Program.

After seven years of experience with this program, we are convinced that it would also work on coed campuses that enroll single fathers as well as single mothers. We are confident that donors would be drawn to them just as they have been drawn to the Wilson program and thus would make such programs affordable. Moreover, because single parents are very often low-income parents, many would qualify for state and federal financial aid.

As each family graduates from Wilson prepared to move into their chosen profession and realize their hopes and dreams, I am convinced that single parents and their children who live on campus make quantum leaps in their development, so much so that we should become advocates for public policies that would make this option widely available. As Ambassador Kunin rightly noted in her keynote address: "To engage effectively in civic life, it is necessary to be dissatisfied enough to want to change things, but optimistic enough to find the energy to make the changes happen."

I am eager to work with other presidents and lawmakers to make the changes in welfare legislation that would encourage single mothers and fathers to complete a four-year degree and break the deadly cycle of poverty and despair.

Lorna Edmundson, president
Wilson College

College of St. Catherine: "Dear Neighbor" mission

Ask anyone tied to the College of St. Catherine about what inspires its commitment to low-income students, and the response will likely be "the CSJs" — St. Catherine's founders and sponsors, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. The sisters' 350-year "dear neighbor" mission manifests in the college's enduring efforts to help our "neighbors," especially the oppressed; the poor; and those who are denied fundamental rights to adequate health care, affordable housing or education that enables economic self-sufficiency. With its focus on making higher education accessible for low-income students, St. Catherine's culture demonstrates this belief in nearly all of its strategic plans, program initiatives, fund-raising campaigns and outreach endeavors.

THE COLLEGE OF ST. CATHERINE

Location: St. Paul, Minn.
President: Andrea Lee
Affiliation: Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Undergraduate enrollment: 3,600

Summary: The mission of the College of St. Catherine obliges the entire institution's commitment to recruiting and retaining low-income students. However, adherence to a mission requires ongoing dialogue and assessment of results to ensure continued success.

Ask anyone outside the financial aid office to identify low-income students at St. Catherine's, and unless the student has revealed her income level in a class or through a written assignment, the response probably will be a blank stare. Low-income students are integrated into the school along with all the other students. Although the college prides itself on *not* expressly designing retention and graduation programs for them, our low-income students particularly benefit from the services St. Catherine's offers all students.

The institution's strategy hinges on an integrated set of policies, programs and services that enable all students to act assertively in their own best interests and to exploit available resources.

Discussions at St. Catherine's about who enrolls and why, about optimum ways to balance the key mission elements of "excellence and opportunity" and about how to align limited resources with critical needs always include careful attention to low-income students and their specific obstacles. Rooted in the College's religious identity, such discussions are humane in spirit and practice and are driven by data that illuminate student persistence.

Regardless of who participates in these discussions — faculty, the president's cabinet, the college council, trustees or enrollment-management officials — the college's mission is never questioned. Although mission drives everything at St. Catherine's — and internal players as well as external observers will testify that it does — the college understands that the mission cannot simply embrace a culture and philosophy connected to the college's religious roots without a disciplined assessment of outcomes. The integration of the spirit of the mission and the practice of collecting and analyzing relevant data enables the college to serve low-income students effectively.

St. Catherine's mission and the sisters' commitment to the "dear neighbor" could easily lead to the unrealistic desire to be all to all. When head and heart are integrated, however, the fervor is disciplined toward fruitful ends. This process, always unfinished, is filled with surprises, new possibilities and occasional disappointment. However, by threading the mission through the initiatives, by building on strengths rather than weaknesses and by making difficult decisions such as eliminating programs, we are increasingly effective for all students.

The college's mission reminds us that academic excellence and support for historically underserved students are not only compatible but also eminently valuable.

In the past and present, St. Catherine's educates women of exceptional ability, regardless of their economic level or social standing. One of the earliest recruiting bulletins (1914) encouraged good students to "Come!" rather than worry about how to pay. It assured them that somehow the bills would be paid and that the sacrifice would be "worth it." Ninety years later, admissions and financial aid counselors send a message, albeit more carefully nuanced, of similar spirit.

Academic excellence and support for historically underserved students are not only compatible but also eminently valuable.

In its early days, the St. Paul campus enrolled the daughters of farmers, mill workers and teachers, whereas the sisters' hospital overlooking the Mississippi River in Minneapolis enrolled future nurses at St. Mary's School of Nursing. In 1964, the sisters began offering two-year degrees at St. Mary's Junior College to open health care professions to low-income students, who welcomed their employment and income prospects. In 1984, St. Catherine's acquired St. Mary's Junior College and integrated two institutions with related but distinct missions focused on the "dear neighbor." Today a single College of St. Catherine offers campuses in both cities and enrolls large numbers of low-income, ethnically diverse and highly capable students.

In Fall 2003, the College of St. Catherine enrolled more than 4,800 students, marking the sixth successive year of record enrollment. The 2,700 students enrolled in its undergraduate "women only" programs make it one of the largest private women's colleges in the nation. Another 900 students are enrolled in associate degree health care programs in Minneapolis, and more than 1,100 graduate students are enrolled in

campus-based and off-site programs. The focus of this essay is the college's 3,600 undergraduates.

In addition to the daughters of teachers, lawyers and airline mechanics, current students include the daughters of farmers from rural Minnesota, single mothers whose enrollment depends on state child-care subsidies and increasing numbers of students of color. Many students are recent immigrants or refugees; the Somali and Hmong communities are especially well represented. Although none of these groups is *de facto* low-income, many students who represent them are.

Reciting statistics about the college's undergraduate students to government and funding officials is always amusing and sometimes dismaying. When the president disclosed that the median family income of a St. Catherine undergraduate — $39,000 — is lower than that of a University of Minnesota student — $50,000 to $60,000 — former governor Jesse Ventura was stunned. He never forgot that statistic. Mayors, senators, government and corporate leaders are also surprised by the profile of a typical St. Catherine student because of its inaccurate reputation as something of an upper-class finishing school. Consider the following:

- St. Catherine's enrolls more African-American students (257) than any Minnesota private college. Indeed, 27 percent of all African-Americans enrolled in Minnesota private colleges attend St. Catherine's. They represent more than 7 percent of the college's undergraduate enrollment.

- Seventeen percent of all minority students enrolled in Minnesota private colleges are enrolled at St. Catherine's, although the College enrolls only 9 percent of the state's private undergraduates.

- A third of St. Catherine undergraduates are first-generation college students, and 35 percent meet Pell Grant income guidelines; one student in four has a family income at or below $25,000.

- 1,420 of 3,400 eligible undergraduates receive need-based Minnesota grants; their median income is $27,000. Of students who receive these grants, 22 percent are students of color, 25 percent are parents, and 45 percent are first-generation college students. Of the 443 nursing students who receive state grants, the median income is $24,400.

- More than half of associate degree students have a zero family contribution based on analysis of their FAFSA.

- About 20 percent of traditional-age students come from single-parent households themselves.

- Twenty-three percent of undergraduate students are parents, and a large number of them are single parents. They report a median family income of $29,000.

- In comparison with other Minnesota private colleges, the College of St. Catherine distributes more gift aid to lower-income students.

- The tuition discount rate for day undergraduates at St. Catherine's is 29 percent, one of the lowest rates in Minnesota.

Responding to stunning demographic statistics, St. Catherine's has intentionally increased the number of students who represent the Twin Cities' changing demography by enrolling significant numbers of Hmong and Hispanic women. A growing number of students, especially East Africans, on the Minneapolis campus are refugees or recent immigrants. Because most of these families left everything behind when they fled

violence and economic devastation, these students are almost always low-income.

Although admission is selective, St. Catherine's admissions committees have always viewed a student's record holistically, balancing academic excellence with a careful, if optimistic, assessment of potential. The college intentionally holds its tuition discount rate at 29 percent for day undergraduates to maintain fiscal strength while meeting student needs. Two-year and weekend students pay lower tuition and receive proportionately less institutional aid. Because the capacity to pay for high-quality private education is so low for so many St. Catherine students, external scholarships and loans enable them to close the gap. Although the average student graduates with a loan in excess of $24,000, the College's loan default rate of 1.3 percent is among the lowest in the nation, a clear testament to effective counseling and high student motivation. The Sisters of St. Joseph also have helped meet the financial challenges inherent in enrolling low-income students in many ways, including their recent extraordinary gift of $20 million.

The college intentionally holds its tuition discount rate at 29 percent for day undergraduates to maintain fiscal strength while meeting student needs.

When recent state budget struggles eroded Minnesota child-care subsidies — St. Catherine's students receive more of these than any other college or university — the college made grants to students to make up for the sudden decrease and began planning and fund raising to counter the probable continuing erosion in these benefits.

Institutional financial aid practices address affordability concerns early in recruiting by providing early estimates of aid; guaranteeing new students a campus job for wages competitive with off-campus jobs; offering scholarships for four years, given appropriate progress and serving students promptly and personally. Student surveys are used to improve services.

"Laddering" has a special place in St. Catherine's strategic plan. It offers students — including low-income students — a seamless opportunity to progress from certificate to associate degree to baccalaureate to master's degree. Students with good grades in associate degree programs are offered baccalaureate program scholarships, and highly structured and intrusive advising strengthens the framework for student success, especially in "high wipeout" courses. The weekend college offers full-time working students a curriculum and a faculty identical to those of the day programs. Consolidating the associate, baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs under a single dean allowed evening and weekend RN-to-BSN and LPN-to-RN transitions. A new degree-completion option for allied health students is nearing final approval. Undergraduate students are eligible for priority admission into competitive graduate programs in physical therapy and occupational science, which also offer 3+3 and 3+2 options. Working women in the weekend college are encouraged to continue in the master's program in organizational leadership.

Fully integrated into the college, these programs have received significant external funding and publicity and have remarkable persistence records. The program most directly linked with low-income students is Access and Success. Active on both campuses, this program offers academic, social, personal, career and financial planning to single mothers, most of whom are low-income. Other programs that promote retention for low-income students include the Catherine Connection, a four-year intrusive retention program focused on personal development and career preparation, and the O'Neill Learning Center, which assists in writing, math and other support for students with disabilities.

The college's recent articulation agreement with Landmark College, a leader in serving students with disabilities, will encourage more students with disabilities to enter the baccalaureate programs. The Enrollment Management Matrix (EMM) is another important initiative that supports student progress to graduation by involving faculty, staff, enrollment managers and administrators to improve services that increase persistence and graduation, especially for students who enter as retention risks. Led by the vice president for student affairs, EMM is a hub of institutional efforts to increase retention.

Partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Greater Expectations initiative has broadened St. Catherine's framework by discussing with the entire community the curriculum, student services and other programs in light of the students' needs and goals, thus strengthening all facets of the college and rendering St. Catherine's even more challenging, supportive and effective. For specific populations, such as students with young children, other long-term partnerships with groups such as the League of Catholic Women and the Jeremiah Project in Minneapolis help to meet the need. Housing is one important component for this population; therefore, the St. Paul campus offers housing for student parents. Some single mothers live in Success Family Housing, an apartment complex designated for them. SWAP (Students Who Are Parents) is an active student organization that supports the enrollment and persistence of student parents.

St. Catherine's philosophy, policies and practices mean that low-income students are not marginalized — perhaps because they are so numerous. However, we hope that grounding our programs in Catholic social teaching based on inviolate respect for the dignity of every person is part of the formula for our success. What else explains these results?

- Associate degree retention rates are nearly double the national averages for two-year colleges.
- About half the associate of arts students enter bachelor's degree programs within one year.
- Low-income day baccalaureate students persist to graduation at about the same rate as all baccalaureate students. Freshman-to-sophomore retention rates for Pell Grant recipients are about the same as for other freshmen. Students reporting family incomes under $25,000 were retained at a rate of 73 percent. Low-income students in their first two years are retained at about the same rate as other students: 77 percent and 79 percent, respectively.
- In the weekend baccalaureate program, low-income students in their first two years are retained at about the same rate as other students in the first two years of enrollment: 68 percent and 72 percent, respectively.

Key beliefs about educating low-income students at the College of St. Catherine include the following:

1. Passion for the mission must drive efforts to enroll and retain low-income students.
2. Academic excellence and access are compatible — not mutually exclusive — goals.
3. Providing access implies commitment to offering appropriate and adequate services to students.
4. It takes a whole village. Best practices require broad-based institutional commitment and must include the faculty. Once the college is committed, every individual is committed.
5. Best practices demand close collaboration between academic and student affairs.
6. Best practices should demonstrate their effectiveness through measurable results.

An institutional culture that regards the mission as sacred combined with the commitment to the "dear neighbor" made by the Sisters of St. Joseph enhances the success of low-income students at the College of St. Catherine. Such a focus calls the entire college to regular, sustained dialogue toward even more notable success in the future. The community at this college engages in this work with joy.

Andrea Lee, president
College of St. Catherine

Hampshire College: James Baldwin Scholars program

Location: Amherst, Mass.
President: Gregory Prince
Undergraduate enrollment: 1,267

Summary: In 1991, Hampshire College recognized an urgent need to diversify its student body and, in cooperation with community organizations, acted quickly. Now known as the James Baldwin Scholars program, the resulting effort continues today with ongoing assessment and offers interesting insights into community partnerships and the sometimes-uneven path toward achieving diversity.

In 1991, Hampshire College, a liberal arts college of 1,200 students, was at a crossroads. Founded in 1970 by Amherst, Mount Holyoke and Smith colleges and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst to provide a fresh academic alternative to the traditions of departmentally based undergraduate education, Hampshire was known for innovation in education and pedagogy. Its curriculum was and remains interdisciplinary; its students still work with small faculty committees to negotiate and design individual courses of study. To complete that study, each student undertakes a substantial scholarly or creative project. Hampshire students enjoy the environment of a small, residential college while enrolling in classes at its sister institutions. The four colleges and the university form a sixth institution: Five Colleges, Inc., perhaps the strongest postsecondary educational consortium in the United States.

The college also has an extensive commitment to social activism, community service and social justice, a logical extension of a curriculum based on interdisciplinary questions and problem-solving and characterized by strong student engagement in raising questions and seeking responses to them. Over time, the college's mission expanded to encompass a transformative liberal arts education

at an institution whose social contributions exceed the sum of those of its individual alumni.

In 1991, the college worried that it lacked the diversity necessary for these goals. It had a diverse faculty — 12 percent were of color; 8 percent were African-American; 42 percent were women. Sixty percent of the students received financial aid; an average grant covered 50 percent of room and board, a level intended to reach students at all economic levels. What was missing was racial diversity among the students. The problem had many causes, including complacency that came from priding ourselves on our diverse faculty.

When Hampshire College opened in 1970, it was not diverse — racially, ethnically or economically.

When Hampshire College opened in 1970, it was not diverse — racially, ethnically or economically — in part because of the founders' assumption that it could operate on tuition alone with only minimal financial aid. As the college adjusted to economic and educational realities over the next 20 years, it had difficulty recruiting first-generation college students, the group most likely to include a high proportion of low-income and racially/ethnically diverse students. By 1990, tuition discounting — the only approach available to a young college with a working endowment under $9 million — achieved significant socioeconomic diversity. Realizing racial and ethnic diversity, however, was more difficult, especially during recession. Students of color represented less than 7 percent of the population — African-Americans less than 3 percent. More worrisome, the trend appeared to be worsening as the country entered its second recession in less than ten years.

Hampshire's fourth president arrived in 1989, and the college opted for aggressive actions — from recruiting stronger trustees to investing more in the admissions office to heightening social engagement in ways that would increase Hampshire's visibility. These priorities led to the creation of the James Baldwin Program at Hampshire College. The program's history, including its successes and failures, illuminates the complexity as well as the value of taking on a difficult educational challenge.

In 1991, the college and the International Association of Chiefs of Police sponsored the first of what would become a series of three conferences on the urban crisis in the United States. These conferences brought together senior administrators — chiefs of police, school superintendents, housing officials, health officers, and development planners — from ten large and medium-sized cities across the United States to brainstorm with each other and with faculty and students about the problems plaguing their cities and to develop collaborative solutions to them.

One of the cities was Springfield, Mass., a city of 150,000 people 20 miles from Amherst. Springfield's demographics typify cities of its size within the Northeast corridor: 56 percent of the population is white; 21 percent African-American; 27 percent Hispanic; 6 percent Asian, Native American and "other." In 1991, Springfield was reeling from layoffs and cutbacks in its principal white-collar industry, insurance, and its shrinking industrial base was losing one employer after another to other parts of the country and the world.

Hampshire had collaborated with Springfield and other agencies within the city since the college's founding. Internships, service-learning placements, and joint grant proposals with the public schools developed a tentative trust between the college and community agencies despite previous collaborations with other colleges that ended within a year or two, after the funds dissipated or faculty and student interests changed. Adding to the fragility of the trust was the activists' recognition that educational institutions invariably enter communities with noble ideals but paternalistic

attitudes. The resulting dynamic was no basis for long-term change: the college perceived its role as being there to do good and provide solutions; the community's role was to act grateful.

After the first conference in 1991, the director of the Learning Tree, a private organization that offers GED courses and other academic skills training to African-American high school graduates and dropouts, asked the Hampshire president to admit four students who had just completed the GED diploma but who had no college options until the following September — if then. He made the case that they would have little chance of reaching college if they had to wait six months without any academic challenges. Most staff at the college felt we could not mount any kind of transition program without careful planning.

We knew that the director was testing Hampshire, appealing to many of the principles and issues discussed at the urban conference. Although he had succeeded at the Learning Tree in getting students back into high school or through the GED, he frankly admitted that he did not have a follow-up plan for the four students. At the same time, Hampshire was worried that the declining numbers of African-American students could reach the vanishing point. The college had to reverse this trend — quickly.

Hampshire was worried that the declining numbers of African-American students could reach the vanishing point.

We decided that the director's call offered an opportunity Hampshire could not ignore. He had given us an aggressive approach to diversify the student body, to respond to the ideas generated by of the urban conference, to work within limited resources to demonstrate that the college itself could make a difference and to model the actions and values it expected its students to exemplify. A program might also confirm that Hampshire's negotiated student contract approach to education, which emphasizes experiential as well as formal learning, can enable nontraditional students to succeed in a rigorous academic environment. Responding quickly clearly posed tremendous risks, but including the four students and the Learning Tree in the planning process was likely to minimize the risks. Our conversations about our needs and motivations were frank; all agreed that the primary concern would be the students. Despite the risks, everyone hoped for a positive experience that would meet the students' and the institution's needs. Hampshire would respect the community as an equal partner and would acknowledge that community residents had special insights to offer about at-risk students.

In December 1991, Hampshire administrators met with the directors of the Learning Tree and a second community organization, Northern Educational Services — a social service agency that offered educational opportunities to school-aged minorities in Springfield — to explore whether the three organizations could provide expanded access to higher education to the city's most at-risk students. Agency intervention had identified students with potential for success, but many were academically underprepared — sometimes high school dropouts. They were students of color, often living in poverty without their families. The Hampshire team traveled to Springfield to meet the principals of the two organizations on their home turf. One assumption that guided the program was that neither the agencies nor the college alone could work effectively with this group of students. We needed each other.

Hampshire could provide the access to higher education that the organizations sought. Its unique pedagogy — contract-based, negotiated learning, with no grades or examinations — provided a more nurturing and encouraging environment for

at-risk students. Of course, all Hampshire students benefit from this approach to teaching and learning. The college also needed to enhance the diversity — ethnic, racial, economic and geographic — of its student body. Maintaining the momentum that had been established at the urban conference and with the agencies was important; all sides wanted to move quickly.

With speed atypical in higher education, the college did move quickly. The modest mission of the pilot program was to provide a 10-week experience for two to four high school or GED graduates from Springfield. The experience would introduce these students to college programs, academic and social expectations and campus living environment. Its goals were for the students to apply to college, prepare for freshman year and eventually graduate.

With speed **atypical** in higher education, the college did **move quickly.**

Four low-income, African-American men selected by the Learning Tree, Northern Educational Services and Hampshire College began the pilot program in Spring 1992. The students received full financial support from the college, lived on campus, enrolled in two Hampshire courses, attended intensive weekly tutorials in writing and study skills and were introduced to computing. Each was assigned faculty and peer advisers and was encouraged to participate in the full range of Hampshire's extracurricular activities.

At the end of the pilot program, Hampshire faculty and staff met to assess the program with representatives from the agencies. All agreed that it had been a difficult semester for all concerned, perhaps because of the haste with which the program was established. The problems all seemed to stem from one source: lack of clarity about expectations. Neither the college nor the agencies had been as explicit as necessary with each other or with the students about what was expected from the partners and from the students. The faculty who evaluated the program expressed concerns about poor attendance and uneven completion of course work. Faculty also questioned how admission decisions about the program were made and who made them. Although major challenges existed, the college and the agencies agreed to continue seeking students who had little chance of enrolling in a four-year college and whom the community organizations could recommend and mentor. We concluded that the results would be worth the risks: Three of the four pilot students graduated from Hampshire.

By the end of the first semester, the program had been named in honor of Hampshire College faculty member James Baldwin and had a director, an advisory committee and dedicated advising staff. Unfortunately, records of the program's earliest years were not maintained with appropriate care.

Despite the difficulties of the first semester, the college, agencies and students remained committed to the program and enthusiastic about its potential for success. They also began planning a more permanent program that would address the deficiencies of the pilot program by articulating clearer criteria for admission and learning goals and by strengthening and clearly explaining the support system. The pre-college portion was expanded from one semester to a full academic year, with the provision that students who completed the year would be admitted to Hampshire. The students were to be fully funded so as to preserve the necessary financial aid for four years. Eligible students could matriculate at Hampshire or other colleges. Although the plan also involves fund raising through grants and gifts and receives some external funding, the program is funded from the college's operating budget. Changes in the selection process and curriculum have responded to emerging needs.

The program's curricular requirements have changed the least. Baldwin students are encouraged

to take three courses each semester and another course during January term. The fall semester courses are a small seminar taught by their advisers and designed to introduce Hampshire and college life, a basic writing course and an elective. Baldwin scholars are encouraged to enroll in the January term, which offers students intensive courses in language, practical courses or workshops or seminars. In spring, they enroll in a writing course and two courses of their choice. Each student takes three 100-level courses, selected in consultation with the academic adviser, each semester. At the end of the first year, faculty formally evaluate the Baldwin scholars, and an assessment committee reviews portfolios of their work.

Although the curriculum has remained stable over the years, administrative support has been strengthened. A highly experienced director, who works closely with the admissions office and the advising office, oversees the program, providing students with orientation and serving as their adviser.

Admission to the program has evolved as well. Although the size of the program has remained constant — six to 10 students each year — the selection process and criteria have changed. In the early years the community agencies were more involved in this phase. Ten years later, the admissions office is more involved; the community, less so. Broader feeder arrangements rendered community-based mentors logistically unfeasible. As community involvement diminished, Hampshire increasingly turned to its students, college counselors, alumni and friends, rather than the agencies, for referrals. The process of identifying potential students for the program continues to evolve.

In the early years, building the program took precedence over evaluating it. Recently, however, the college undertook its most comprehensive assessment of the James Baldwin Scholars Program, conducting interviews with as many of the 78 students as possible. Interviews with current and former students have been particularly difficult to arrange. Of particular interest, however, is determining whether students who completed the program but did not matriculate at Hampshire — or who matriculated but did not graduate — continued their studies at other institutions. Assessing whether the participants considered the program constructive or discouraging was important. This review is far from complete and has generated more questions for review.

Although the size of the program has remained constant — six to ten students each year — the selection process and criteria have changed.

From 1991 through 2002, 72 students participated in the program. Eighteen did not complete it satisfactorily, and 54 matriculated at Hampshire. Of the 54, 16 students graduated from Hampshire; 24 have left Hampshire; and 14 are currently enrolled. Six more Baldwin Scholars joined the program in Fall 2003. The current retention rate is 66 percent, which compares to that of the college as a whole. The overall graduation rate for students of color is, however, higher than the rate for the Baldwin Scholars.

These statistics do not suggest a program of unparalleled success. They raise many additional questions and concerns, such as the correlation between graduation and factors such as age and income. Many Baldwin Scholars were older students; therefore, we must compare their graduation rates with those of other older students. We also must examine whether graduation rates are linked to economic status.

Experience and data show that challenges remain; nonetheless, it cannot be assumed that this project is a well-intended but failed experiment. What did the Baldwin Program do? It introduced college to students with few if any educational

Table I: Comparison of the Baldwin Scholars to the overall student-of-color graduation rate

Entering class*	# of entering Baldwin Scholars	# of entering students of color	# of entering students	# of matriculated Baldwin Scholars	# of Baldwin Scholars who graduated	# of students of color who graduated	# of all students who graduated	% of Baldwin Scholars who graduated**	% of students of color who graduated**	% of all students who graduated**
1992	8	38	357	5	3	22	210	60.00%	57.89%	58.82%
1993	6	52	359	5	3	26	192	60.00	50.00	53.48
1994	8	61	373	7	3	32	197	42.86	52.46	52.82
1995	7	46	371	5	2	25	214	40.00	54.35	57.68
1996	6	47	346	3	1	30	218	33.33	63.83	63.01
1997	6	57	393	5	3	33	232	60.00	57.89	59.03
1998	6	36	354	4	0	25	220	0.00	69.44	62.15
1999***	5	52	375	4	0	18	178	0.00	34.62	47.47
2000***	6	49	364	5	1	4	29	N/A	8.16	7.97
2001***	3	62	404	3	N/A	1	7	N/A	1.61	1.73
2002	11	58	369	8	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
2003	6	81	435	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	78	639	4,500	54	16	216	1,697			

* Hampshire class is determined by the year in which a student enters; for example, a student who entered in 1992 would graduate in 1996.
** Percent of Baldwin Scholars who graduated is based on the number who matriculated.
*** Students still active; percentages will change.

alternatives. Their educations have enabled them to develop their skills and talents, thus expanding their range of career opportunities and potential for personal growth. The statistics mask the striking achievements of several Baldwin Scholars — for example, the two scholars who, while still at Hampshire, contributed an essay and a poem to *Soulfires: Young Black Men on Love and Violence*, a book edited by Rohan B. Preston and Daniel J. Wideman and published in 1996 by Penguin Books. The vibrant individuals of the James Baldwin Scholars Program certainly have enriched the Hampshire campus.The program has signaled Hampshire's ongoing commitment to diversity and turned around Hampshire's recruiting effort while affirming that Hampshire would respond to the community's needs — not simply pick and choose opportunities to be "of help."

The program has taught us many important lessons. We are proud of its emphasis on the value

of nontraditional students and the base it provides them. We wish that greater financial resources would permit us to better fund our students and thus alleviate demands that can interfere with their educations. However, we are excited about the creative potential of this pool of students. Although our assessment remains in progress, we have formed four succinct conclusions: Expensive? Yes. Labor-intensive? Yes. Frustrating? Often. Worth the challenges? Emphatically — yes.

Gregory Prince, president
Hampshire College

Note: Yaniris Fernandez, Associate Dean of Faculty, co-authored. Nancy Kelly, senior adviser to the president, also contributed to the preparation of this essay.

Arcadia University: Starting with eighth-graders

Philadelphia's inner-city Morris E. Leeds Middle School might seem a long way from Arcadia University[3] in suburban Philadelphia. In 1992, however, the two joined to work toward a common goal: preparing low-income, high-risk students for college. Because only 44 percent of Leeds students complete high school and only 20 percent of those enroll in college (less than 9 percent of all Leeds Middle School youngsters), almost the entire student body can be considered at risk. The students we select for our GIFTS (Guaranteed Investment for Tomorrow's Scholars) program are eighth-graders who demonstrate academic promise but might otherwise quit school or neglect college. Many face financial challenges. They also often lack personal motivation or have little support from their families or schools. Most lack the role models who can help them succeed.

ARCADIA UNIVERSITY SINCE 1853

Location: Glenside, Pa.
President: Betty Landman
Undergraduate enrollment: 3,250

Summary: Arcadia University recruits eighth-grade students from Morris E. Leeds Middle School for its Guaranteed Investment for Tomorrow's Scholars program. Students receive academic and technological skills, tutoring and a variety of support services and cultural programs to prepare them to graduate from high school and enroll in a postsecondary university, often Arcadia itself.

Until two years ago, 40 students participated in the GIFTS Scholars program each year: 10 in each grade, ninth through 12th. Two years ago, we added five students per year in a somewhat revised format, thus making 15 per year, a total of 60 participants. In the past decade, as each cohort of 10 GIFTS Scholars graduated from high school and entered college, 10 (now 15) new ninth-graders replaced them.

Because we strongly feel that the students must be involved actively rather than passively receive this honor, we require that students be nominated by their teachers, obtain two letters of recommendation from community sponsors and submit an essay.

As an added inducement for participation, the university promises scholarships for 50 percent to 75 percent of the full tuition and fees each of four years (depending on financial need) for those GIFTS Scholars who matriculate at Arcadia. Unfortunately, offers such as these often have a history of falling by the wayside. They may go unused either because many of the targeted youngsters do not "make it" through high school (failed expectations) or do not see college as a goal (failed aspirations). We believe that linking the middle school and college entry years with special guidance and with academic and emotional support throughout high school dramatically increases their chances of using the scholarships.

All of the GIFTS Scholars have graduated from high school, and 90 percent have matriculated at postsecondary institutions.

The GIFTS Scholars program is a multi-age, intergenerational program. Arcadia University faculty and student mentors and Philadelphia teachers, pupils and parents (or primary caretakers) collaborate to support students through high school. Three programmatic components have existed since 1992: the summer enrichment program (to enhance literacy, mathematics and study skills), social/cultural activities (to familiarize students with a campus while fostering self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem) and parent/guardian workshops.

The program has been an unqualified success in terms of its original goals. *All* of the GIFTS Scholars have graduated from high school, and 90 percent have matriculated at postsecondary institutions. This rate is far above the norm for Leeds Middle School graduates and is far beyond that of Philadelphia schools in general, in which approximately 50 percent of students not enrolled in magnet schools fail to graduate. Unfortunately, the rate of retention for African-American GIFTS students[4] — at least at Arcadia University — hovers between 45 percent and 50 percent, approximately 14 percent below our overall four-year graduation rate of 64 percent. Although these students have had continuing collegiate programs of support, we now are working to address this issue in new ways. The major roadblocks to their success are patent technological and academic underpreparation and values that do not emphasize acquiring these skills. These students are on the wrong side of the so-called "digital divide."

Accordingly, a new component of our program attempts to correct deficient computer skills that result from insufficient technological resources in students' homes and schools. This deficit puts these students at great competitive disadvantage for undergraduate and graduate degrees and ultimately limits their access to the job market. Therefore, the program now offers comprehensive computer technology instruction to the GIFTS Scholars and their parents within the framework of academic and community projects that feature their new skills.

We evaluate the program in multiple ways: student and parent questionnaires, participation indices and tests of subject content (taken before and after the program). Our data indicate that this program has bettered the lives of 240 high school graduates and their families since 1992. It also has had a significant impact on the Arcadia University students, who serve in several of the program activities. Our data show that the program goes beyond the students; parents, guardians and even siblings also benefit. Students become less intimidated by academic institutions, and as

students widen their horizons, they develop a sense of responsibility to and better understanding of community — the same benefit that Arcadia undergraduates discover in the program.

Arcadia University has had a long history of commitment to community service and outreach to Philadelphia's inner-city schools, especially our neighbor, District 6, to which the Morris E. Leeds Middle School belongs. Nearly 40 years ago, the university began providing free tutoring in reading to elementary school children in District 6. About 15 years ago, using the students and faculty in our extensive graduate and undergraduate programs in reading education, we added diagnostic services that allow us to individualize support programs for students struggling with reading.

By the late 1970s, Arcadia also led area institutions in a consortium that offered in-service workshops to teachers. One major emphasis was pedagogy in mathematics, science and technology. Meanwhile, Arcadia — one of three college founders of the national writing-across-the-curriculum movement — extended this concept to area elementary and secondary schools and their teachers. Over the years, Arcadia has supplemented these programs through additional initiatives and partnerships. A sample of these, particularly as they relate to the development or refinement of the GIFTS program, follows.

- **Getting to Know Us.** Begun in 1989, this program eases the transition from high school to college for minority inner-city high school students via on-campus admissions and financial aid counseling, computer orientation workshops and library skills sessions. Sixty students are selected annually from Philadelphia's Germantown and Martin Luther King, Jr. high schools.

- **Apprentice Teachers Program.** During the summers of 1993 through 1998, the university participated in a teacher education program designed by Concerned Black Men, Inc. in cooperation with the School District of Philadelphia. The goal was to increase the number of qualified African-American male teachers in the Philadelphia public schools.

- **Preparing Future Minority Educators for Tomorrow's Schools.** In February 1993, Arcadia received a Celebration of Teaching grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for Preparing Future Minority Educators for Tomorrow's Schools. The project's primary objective was introducing urban minority middle school students and their parents to careers in teaching.

- **Students at the Center Program.** From 1996 to 2000, under a grant from the DeWitt Wallace Foundation — a consortium that comprised the School District of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Education Fund, the Franklin Institute, the Philadelphia Writing Project and Arcadia University — collaborated on a Students at the Center Program. The program aimed to teach Philadelphia teachers how to put "students at the center" of education by helping children discover knowledge themselves through such intellectual skills as interpreting primary data and source material, writing reflectively and conducting inquiry projects.

- **Technology Workshop for Secondary Biology, Mathematics, Health Science and Social Studies Teachers.** Since 1999, with financial support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the Department of Education, Arcadia and the seven other institutions from the eight-college Southeastern Pennsylvania Consortium for Higher Education (a 10-year collaboration) have offered a series of four-week free technology workshops each summer for teachers in the Greater Philadelphia area.

We could list more of Arcadia's numerous outreach programs, but these few illustrate Arcadia's predisposition to a program like GIFTS and long-standing commitment to work with the community toward enhancing the total educational experience and opportunity for students

from previously underserved populations to graduate from college.

Arcadia enrolls about 3,250 students, half undergraduate and half graduate. Approximately 60 percent of our undergraduates are first-generation college students. This year, 98 percent of the entering freshmen received some form of financial aid. Around 30 percent of the awardees received merit aid as part of their package. Public tuition and fees for 2003-2004 are $21,270; room and board is an additional $8,620. Despite these seemingly prohibitive costs, the average aid package for GIFTS students is $20,917; for families with incomes of $25,000 or less, the average package is $21,892. Approximately 48 percent of full-time freshman tuition and fees is returned to students in the form of Arcadia University scholarship aid.

The following chart[5] shows the family income distribution of full-time, low-income Pennsylvania undergraduates who came to Arcadia in 2002-2003:

Below $10,000	9.2 percent
$10,000-19,999	10.5 percent
$20,000-29,999	16.4 percent

Thus, 36.1 percent of Arcadia's students from Pennsylvania come from families with annual incomes of less than $30,000.

Over the last 10 years, four-year graduation rates have remained roughly in the middle to upper 60 percent range; rates for African-American students fall approximately 14 percent behind. Over six years, 69 percent of low-income students and 58 percent of African-American students graduated. In general, these graduation rates for African-Americans at institutions like ours are good, but they fall below our goal that all student groups graduate at the same rate.

At the time that the university adopted Leeds Middle School, the school was serving 428 seventh- and eighth-grade students; 99 percent were African-American. That year, 13 percent of the seventh-graders and 7 percent of the eighth-graders were retained in grade. That same year, however, the school suspended 139 seventh-graders and 128 eighth-graders. Twenty-two percent of the families were designated as qualified for special federally supported programs or funds. As noted previously, only 44 percent of Leeds Middle School youngsters complete high school, and fewer than 9 percent of the school's eighth-grade graduates acquire any form of higher education.

From the beginning, there were five major components to the program:

1) **Summer enrichment.** The goals of the Summer Enrichment Program were to improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills, to improve communication skills, to increase esteem about self and race and to expand creative horizons while demonstrating that academic pursuits can be fun. Another major aim was for the students to experience and feel comfortable on a college campus. The summer program covered formal courses in the following areas:
   a) *Mathematics*. The structure incorporated new methods of delivery, such as games designed to engage the students in their own learning. The students' math levels varied; therefore, the activities focused on individual needs, and additional tutoring helped those who most needed it.
   b) *African and African-American Literature*. Reading and literature were combined with African-American history. The author of their basic textbook regularly visited campus, met with students and autographed their books. Reading about the great leaders of Africa and the many accomplishments of Africans and African-Americans also developed students' comprehension and writing skills. They did research projects on famous people and published their

work on a prominent bulletin board at the university.

c) *Science*. The science curriculum also was innovative in that the students were asked to become inventors. They researched inventions developed by Africans and African-Americans and then planned, designed, implemented and displayed their own inventions.

d) *Friday activities*. On Fridays, community artists were invited to explain how they produce art and helped the students produce their own art. Additional Friday activities included weekly swimming, basketball and soccer in university facilities.

e) *General format*. An Arcadia student mentor drove students to and from Leeds school daily. The program began with breakfast in Arcadia's student dining hall. Breakfast built group cohesion and encouraged informal participation in campus life.

2) **Mentors/tutors.** Specially trained Arcadia students mentor Leeds students as part of the academic program. The mentor/tutor part of the program was not ideal. Especially in the summer, students were not available in sufficient numbers to provide all of the GIFTS students with mentor/tutorial support. A number of student mentors, who were originally expected to contact their Leeds student three times a month, let their responsibility slip when other commitments interfered. When it worked, however, both the GIFTS Scholar and the collegiate mentor enjoyed the relationship.

3) **Community service.** Because GIFTS Scholars progress to as many as 12 high schools when they leave Leeds, organizing regular activities has been difficult without a scheduled program. As the description of the newest program will indicate, we have built community service into the revised Saturday morning format and have found this a more intimate and sure way to bring GIFTS and Arcadia students together.

4) **Parent workshops.** With initial funding from the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education, a parent support program was developed. Program activities directly influenced the practical and psychological aspects of the student-caretaker relationship and sought to remove educational impediments that block caretakers from academically assisting their children. Assessments of needs and parenting skills are a first step. Then parents or caregivers can participate in workshops on parenting skills or academic support. We recently developed new workshops on preparing for college; topics include financial aid, applications and opportunities.

5) **Cultural/social activities.** During the summer enrichment programs and now as part of the Saturday morning programs, scholars, Arcadia students, parents/guardians, teachers and program administrators take students on trips to places such as the African-American museum in Philadelphia, New York's African Market Place or Harlem, where, among other activities, they attend a performance at the Apollo Theater. Other Saturdays, the same group might spend the morning or day in community service. Students, caretakers and teachers also regularly join campus enrichment activities.

In 1994, through a grant from Scholarship America's Dollars for Scholars program, we created a community board to raise scholarships for students who needed supplemental funds or who chose or were best served in a college other than

Arcadia. This group was modestly successful through a significant array of fund-raising activities, but funds for scholarships outside of Arcadia have remained relatively scarce. The community board created to support this effort still functions as a consulting group for the GIFTS program.

In 2000, we recognized that although we were meeting our goal of high school graduation and college enrollment for no less than 90 percent of GIFTS Scholars, retention rates were falling short of expectations. Our resulting program modifications addressed the primary concern: technological and academic underpreparation. Funded in part from a grant from Campus Compact/MCI-WorldCom under its Mapping Civic Engagement program, our newest program encompasses the following components:

- Ten Saturday morning content-based classes per year for all students during each of their four years in high school. These classes are held in the computer laboratories at Arcadia University, where each student works on his or her own computer under the tutelage of two instructors.
- Participation in monthly community service activities jointly with Arcadia University students.
- Computer classes for parents/guardians.
- Parent-student activities such as a financial aid seminar.
- A special trip at the culmination of students' study of African-American culture.

In response to extensive interviews with more than half of the parents and students, the program will be modified to include SAT preparation classes; regular visits by GIFTS program staff to the high schools; preparation for job applications and resumes; e-mail connections with high school students in the Soweto district of Johannesburg, South Africa, and additional cultural enrichment programming.

The most recent version of our program (the Saturday morning academic-year program using technology as the program focus) has set the following goals:

- Ninety percent of the GIFTS Scholars will meet college entrance requirements.
- Eighty percent of the GIFTS Scholars who attend college will complete their post-secondary institutional programs.
- Fifty percent of the parents of GIFT Scholars will participate in computer classes (this was reduced to 25 percent the second year because only 9 percent participated in the first year; in year two, the 25 percent goal was attained).
- GIFTS Scholars will develop proficiency in computer functions: how its parts work and how to maintain computers.
- GIFTS Scholars will develop word processing skills, learn how to use graphics, research a report, network computers at other schools and use the Internet as a source of information.
- GIFTS Scholars will collaborate with Arcadia University students in joint community service that will strengthen the computer skills of both groups.

Our surveys of self-esteem, program participation index, pre- and post-testing of skill and learning outcomes; exit interviews and focus groups have helped us document and revise the program and its goals toward expansion of support services that parents and students value. The first measure, self-esteem, is the most elusive; however, during the 12 years of the program, at least nine of every 10 GIFTS Scholars have graduated from high school (compared with 44 percent of their peers). Almost all of them have gone on to higher education (compared with around 9 percent of their Leeds peers). The program participation rate also has been excellent; only one or two students out of the 40 have fallen by the wayside.

Exit interviews and focus groups, while demonstrating strong support for the program, have suggested providing access to computers in

homes or schools, beginning the support program earlier (e.g., when students enter middle school) and developing a leadership training component to address responsibilities, conflict management, problem solving, goal setting, public speaking and personal business management.

Pursuing these directions may depend on increased external funding. To date, program costs have been supplemented by several grants from the Consortium for the Advancement of Higher Education, the Connelly Foundation, Scholarship America's Dollars for Scholars program, Campus Compact/Brown University/MCI-WorldCom and the selfless gifts of time from countless members of the university, middle school and community. The need is certainly there; we don't know as yet whether we can fully address it.

Bette Landman, president
Arcadia University

Merrimack College: Accept the Challenge program

Yaritza wants to be the first in her family to attend college. Farlie, a native Haitian, is passionate about poetry. Yanelly hopes to become a doctor.

For these students, low-income immigrants living with their families or on their own in the 13th-poorest city in the country, graduating from high school is a challenge that many of their peers never meet. Pursuing a college degree is very often an unrealized dream.

With this in mind, Merrimack College administrators and faculty have worked closely with teachers and counselors at Lawrence (Mass.) High School since 1986 to identify first- and second-year academically talented bilingual students who face financial challenges. Such students are ideal candidates for the Accept the Challenge (ATC) program, which helps English as a Second-Language (ESL) learners complete high school, prepare for college, explore career choices and develop a sense of ownership in their community.

Many of Merrimack's past students were among the first generation in their families to earn college degrees. Throughout Merrimack's early decades, many of these students came from Lawrence, Mass., and

Merrimack COLLEGE

Location: North Andover, Mass.
President: Richard Santagati
Affiliation: Catholic – Augustinian
Undergraduate enrollment: 2,500

Summary: Merrimack College's Accept the Challenge program serves selected low-income, immigrant students from Lawrence High School in Lawrence, Mass., with the tutoring, on-campus courses and other activities and personal support that they need to realize their full potential. After high school graduation, many attend Merrimack on special scholarships that fund their education, and room and board for four years.

the surrounding Merrimack Valley. Lawrence, "the Immigrant City," was founded in 1850 and has been the first American residence for many immigrants from Europe, Latin America and Asia ever since.

In the past 25 years, Merrimack College has widened the geographic area and diversified socioeconomic levels from which it draws students. However, since its founding in 1947, the college has remained committed to its Merrimack Valley roots and to the ever-changing immigrant populations of this area. As Merrimack grows beyond regional college status, it continues to maintain and cherish its origins and responsibilities to the "Immigrant City."

Merrimack College enrolls 2,500 students from 29 states and 25 countries on a 220-acre campus. Nationally recognized for its liberal arts curriculum and its dedication to financial accessibility, Merrimack is a Catholic college in the Augustinian tradition. It offers a rich academic program for students seeking associate's and bachelor's degrees and offers a master's degree in education. The college's four main divisions are Liberal Arts, Science and Engineering, the Girard School of International Business and Finance and Continuing and Professional Education. All students pursue a set of core courses in the liberal arts and sciences. Merrimack students develop their degree programs from offerings in 35 concentrations. Nearly 80 percent live on campus.

In 2002-2003, 25 percent of student family incomes were below $50,000. Half fell between $50,000 and $100,000, and about 25 percent were above $100,000. The average income of students' families has shifted from about $45,000 in the early 1990s to about $85,000 today. In 2001-2002, 70 percent of all Merrimack College students received financial aid. The college's overall scholarship budget was about $12 million in 2002-2003 and about $13 million in 2003-2004.

The Accept the Challenge program began 17 years ago with the mission of increasing high school graduation and college enrollment and retention rates. Each year, 35 to 50 Lawrence High School ESL students participate in an after-school program and a summer campus residency. A progressively more intensive community engagement program promotes leadership, neighborhood revitalization and self-confidence. Students work toward improving their oral and written English and nurture analytical and observation skills. Although these academic skills will help prepare them for college admission, the program also helps them to identify goals — in part through exploring career opportunities — and to navigate around barriers toward their success. Students begin with developing a sense of community ownership through discovering shared ties. ATC students become aware of other cultures and learn to take pride in their own, and as they develop the ability to view problems from different perspectives, they are better prepared for college.

> ATC students become aware of other cultures and learn to take pride in their own.

Criteria for acceptance by the Accept the Challenge program include freshman or sophomore status at Lawrence High School, enrollment in the Lawrence High School ESL program, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For example, the yearly income for a family of six must not exceed $43,827. They must be United States citizens or permanent residents. ATC students are selected by recommendations from ESL teachers and guidance counselors.

Each September, a Lawrence public school guidance counselor receives and distributes a program description, applications and recommendation forms to all ESL teachers and guidance counselors. Teachers are instructed to select academically promising students who would be dedicated to the program.

After applications are submitted, the program director meets with each student at the high

school to explain the program, its benefits, and the commitment it requires. Personal interviews and evaluations from teachers and guidance counselors are part of the selection process, in which students are considered for their academic promise — not necessarily for their actual performance. Obstacles impede many students' progress; the ATC program helps overcome them. Each year, enough new students are accepted to maintain a total of 40 students in the program. Traditionally, ATC students have been Latinos; the last five years, however, have shown a different profile: about 20 percent are Cambodian, Haitian or Vietnamese.

The ATC students attend classes two to four days a week after their regular school day. The classes are held at a Merrimack College facility in Lawrence or on the Merrimack campus, a few miles from the city. Students concentrate on developing their English language skills while studying local history, American literature and the American political system. They also receive extensive tutoring in math and the sciences. ATC pairs participants with Merrimack college students, who assist them with mentoring, homework and problem-solving and goal-setting activities. This format exposes high school students to a college campus and presents a college education as an achievable goal.

Students join the program as high school freshmen or sophomores and continue until high school graduation. Regular attendance is required; class absences must be excused with a note from a parent or doctor. More than two unexcused absences can result in dismissal from the program. Students are also required to attend the summer program and participate in community engagement activities.

All activities of the program are integrated into the framework of learning English while continually emphasizing setting goals and growing academically. Counseling helps students to stay in school, succeed in their courses and go on to higher education. Academic content is chosen for its suitability in preparing students for higher education by stimulating oral and written discussion in English (including vocabulary development), developing observational and analytical skills, motivating students and introducing career choices.

The academic year is divided into two parts. First, the students focus on achievement and on themselves in relation to external forces. Their contemplation of career choices can thus become more daring. The principle is to identify who they are, and to learn to use their strengths appropriately. The courses in this first segment include the Lawrence History and Mapping Project, government and laws, and reading and grammar.

> The curriculum's backbone is writing skills, college/career preparation, American history and test preparation.

Focus shifts from individual achievement to individual responsibility in the second part of the year. Students are reminded of their own goals but also learn to interact constructively with others. The curriculum's backbone is writing skills, college/career preparation, American history and test preparation, but it also has included American literature, debate, math, theater and journalism.

ATC students live on the Merrimack campus for five weeks in the summer, attending daily classes taught by college faculty. These classes help students to develop their skills in English and offer a valuable variety of academic disciplines typical of a college curriculum. The residency component also prepares them for living away from home.

The last five years in particular have been a great success. Students have regular opportunities to be leaders while they are still in high school. For example, students coordinated community gardens in many neighborhoods, provided lead paint screening information to residents and attended neighborhood meetings. They also help facilitate

other summer programs at Merrimack, such as the summer science camp for Lawrence elementary school students.

During their senior year in high school, students' focus shifts to college preparation, especially college applications and financial aid. When ATC students graduate from Lawrence High School, they apply to colleges of their choice. If they are accepted at Merrimack College through the normal admissions procedure, they receive full scholarships for four-year tuition and room and board.

Although classroom time is devoted to academics, the ATC staff provides valuable additional services to many students. Many ATC students live below the poverty line with parents who work two or three jobs. Some of the students work 30 to 40 hours weekly themselves. Sometimes the most important service the staff can provide is listening. Students may face parental substance abuse, sexual and physical abuse or deportation issues. Some students live with older siblings or relatives, whereas others have even been independent while in high school, supporting themselves at minimum wage jobs when their parents return to their native countries. Although many are strong students, their challenges stretch far beyond the classroom. The ATC staff must be especially dedicated to meeting those challenges; for many students, the staff have been the only reliable people in their lives over the years.

Many ATC students live below the poverty line with parents who work two or three jobs.

One example of external challenges that ATC has seen recently was a Guatemalan student who was asked to leave the country when the United States withdrew amnesty for Guatemalan refugees. He had attended Merrimack for just a short time before this occurred. His father had been involved with an anti-government group in Guatemala, and the family feared for their lives if they returned. ATC staff met with the family and their congressman to address the situation; the family continues to pursue the case as they live here illegally. Another student lived with an abusive father. ATC staff arranged for a counselor to visit with the student until she could move out of her house and to safety. Although she has since left the college because of academic issues related to her trauma, she is working and remains in regular contact with ATC staff.

ATC staff are also sensitive to cultural difficulties of immigrant families. For example, in many Anglo families, children are excited about the possibility of moving away from home to go to college, and parents often are happy to see their child have such an experience. In Latino families, however, students are generally uncomfortable with distance from their families, and their families are reluctant to let go. Therefore, the summer program helps students adjust to independent life away from home. Some students have run into serious academic problems because they fail to make this adjustment.

An external evaluator recently assessed ATC and recommended improvements. Completing a full evaluation of the program was difficult because the database of records was not consistently maintained, but the assessment confirmed the percentage of students who have completed the Accept the Challenge program through senior year of high school and who have continued on to college over the last six years; the results are shown in the table on Page 51.

The average GPA for Accept the Challenge students who graduate from Merrimack College is 2.72. Since the program began in 1986-1987, Merrimack has enrolled 55 ATC students, providing them with full tuition, room and board. As of May 2003, thirty have graduated from Merrimack, and 13 are currently enrolled here. About 55 percent major in sciences and engineering, 24 percent in liberal arts, and 21 percent in

High school graduation year	Number of seniors in ATC	Percentage of students who went to college	Number of students who matriculated at Merrimack
1996	10	80%	6
1997	9	55	5
1998	13	31	1
1999	14	64	5
2000	13	85	5

business, and nearly half graduate in the top 10 percent of their college classes. The retention rate for ATC students enrolled at Merrimack is 83 percent — a rate much higher than that of their peers at the national level. Finally, for students who received support from the ATC staff and who did not withdraw for external personal reasons, 95 percent have graduated or are still enrolled.

At Merrimack, ATC students perform 160 hours of community service each academic year. They also counsel, tutor and mentor the high school ATC students. Although the dropout rate in Lawrence High School has often approached 50 percent, every student who has persisted in the ATC program since 1990 has graduated from high school. They have moved on to institutions such as Boston College, Boston University, Mount Holyoke College, Northeastern University and Merrimack. ATC college graduates are now serving in the fields of law, finance, health care, journalism, engineering, environmental advocacy, technology, business, social work and public policy; many are leaders in Lawrence.

All ATC students who matriculated at Merrimack College during or before 2000-2001 received full scholarships for tuition, room, board, books and fees for a maximum of eight semesters. Students must attend school full-time. Those who leave Merrimack may use the scholarship for up to one year after they leave. They are required to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)to determine their eligibility for federal and state aid. All eligible federal and state aid is applied toward their direct costs before the ATC scholarship is applied. As of 2001-2002, ATC students are responsible for the full cost of their books, fees and insurance. If necessary, students can use student loans to cover those costs. ATC students who want to transfer into Merrimack after studying at another college must do so within three years of high school graduation.

In 2002-2003, nine of the 13 ATC students enrolled at Merrimack College qualified for federal and state aid. The average family income for this group was $23,000. The average Pell Grant was $3,000, and the average Massachusetts state grant was $1,200. Institutional scholarships covered the remaining costs. The other four students had high financial need, according to FAFSA, but did not qualify for federal or state aid. Their family incomes ranged from $45,000 to $75,000.

The recent evaluation of ATC yielded valuable insights that will help us build on its many successes. We must develop and maintain a well-structured database for use in future assessments. A stronger transition program would better facilitate the move from high school ESL courses to college courses that are taught only in English. One helpful step would be an earlier, more formal evaluation of students' language skills. Rather than waiting until midway through the first year, we assess their skills when they enter the program. Other potentially helpful programs include increased preparation for SAT and MCAS and a stronger writing and research component.

Merrimack College's ATC has been a successful program for many young citizens and their families in Lawrence, Mass. The ATC graduates who matriculate at Merrimack also enrich the campus as a whole through intellectual, social and cultural diversity. Moreover, they challenge Merrimack to remain faithful to the Merrimack Valley and to its many immigrant peoples. For Yaritza, Farlie and Yanelly, the rewards of pursuing and realizing their dreams are priceless.

Richard Santagati, president
Merrimack College

Cedar Crest College: Women and science

Since its founding in 1867 as a women's liberal arts college, Cedar Crest's core mission has been to provide an excellent education for women who will become leaders across all sectors in society. Ensuring access for low-income students has been an important part of this mission. Records dating from first classes clearly indicate the trustees' and the president's early commitment to education as an instrument of social change, mobility and opportunity.

In the early days, Cedar Crest addressed these aspirations through a small number of on-campus jobs that covered the costs of young women's educations. When private scholarship dollars became available in the 1930s, a select number of local students of high achievement and need were invited to attend Cedar Crest, generally with the understanding that when they were able, they would repay their scholarships, thus enabling others to attend with their private financial gifts.

Scholarship and financial aid programs at the state and federal level, made available in the second half of the 20th century, allowed more low-income students to attend Cedar Crest. In the 1970s, consistent with the college's commitment to access, a special initiative, the Portal Program, now called Lifelong Learning, was initiated. Its focus

Cedar Crest College

Location: Allentown, Pa.
President: Dorothy Blaney
Affiliation: Women's college
Undergraduate enrollment: 1,500

Summary: After retention rates hit an institutional low in 1999, Cedar Crest College implemented programs that increased retention for all students — not only those from low-income groups — through personal attention and guidance. Moreover, its research component for women majoring in the natural sciences has bolstered participant graduation rates to as high as 100 percent.

was recruitment of women 25 and older. Today, these lifelong learners represent about half of the college's student body. Most attend part time and do not qualify for most financial aid or scholarships. Although we believe that many of these students are low-income, they do not submit family income information and thus cannot be discussed in this essay. Our focus therefore will be the low-income traditional student.

Currently, in a budget of $26.6 million, $6.6 million is committed to scholarship and financial aid. This level of support enabled the college, while not exceeding a 36 percent tuition discount rate, to enroll a Fall 2002, freshmen class in which 16 percent had a family income of $25,000 or less. Another 25 percent had a family income of $30,000 or less, and 36 percent had a family income of $40,000 or less. Sixty percent were first-generation college students. Forty-seven percent of the freshman class qualified for Pell Grants. Over the last four years, the percentage of traditional freshmen with family incomes below $25,000 has averaged 16 percent. In analyzing their persistence, we discovered that low-income status does not appear to be a significant variable in predicting success or failure at Cedar Crest. Put another way, freshman-to-sophomore retention rates since 1999 have been virtually identical for low-income students and their peers.

Since 1999 — when the college experienced its worst attrition on record — we have introduced a few very important and highly successful initiatives, which, as these retention rates show, work equally well with students at all income levels. Of course, financial aid awards based on family need are oriented toward lower-income students. Although the college offers programs in high schools in which the majority of students come from low-income families and/or minority family backgrounds, no funds are specially earmarked for them. Moreover, no special programs consider income level, religion or race as a key factor. Quite simply, Cedar Crest's values and strategies have led us to offer the same individual attention and targeted feedback to all applicants, regardless of income, race or religion. As a result, we have a student body in which 15 percent to 20 percent are minorities, 60 percent are first-generation, and the average family income ranges from $50,000 to $62,000. One in six students comes from the lowest income level. We have also increased enrollment from 758 in 1989 to more than 1,500 today.

The core elements of our Connect with Success program to retain students and support their achievements are the following:

1. **Freshman Faculty Adviser**: A faculty adviser from a student's field of interest meets with the student at a June orientation. Together they plan the student's schedule according to the academic requirements and her personal circumstances, such as off-campus jobs, sports, family or other responsibilities.

2. **Big Sis/Little Sis**: Admissions counselors who have met the students pair with the student affairs office to find appropriate matches between incoming freshmen and juniors.

3. **College Life 101**: Freshmen enroll in this half-credit course in sections of 15 in their first eight weeks. A team comprising the faculty adviser, a staff member and an upperclass student leads the class. The weekly 50-minute meeting addresses requisites for success.

4. **Becoming a Master Student**: Offered in person and online, this course enables students to listen carefully to lectures, take good notes, think and read at the college level, manage time and approach tests confidently.

5. **Alumnae Mentor Program**: This program pairs current students with alumnae in their

fields of interest for career advice and encouragement.

After heavy attrition of freshmen in 1999, we added a new program, the Staff/Freshman Mentor Program, which has helped improve student success and retention from the 62 percent level in 1999 to 94 percent for Fall 2003. Cedar Crest staff lead groups of 10 to 15 new students, connecting them with the people, services and activities that enhance their first year. The more connected freshmen feel, the more likely they are to maintain enrollment. Mentors phone once a week for the first — most critical — eight weeks of the fall semester. They check on how the freshmen are doing and remind them of upcoming activities and responsibilities. Throughout the academic year, they remain in touch at least once a week by phone or e-mail. Students receive birthday cards from their mentors and meet once a month for lunch with mentors and other freshmen. Each student receives a framed photograph of herself with her mentor — a memento from their first night at Cedar Crest, when they are encouraged to "picture the possibilities."

Other staff/freshman mentor highlights include pool parties in the Rodale Aquatic Center; pumpkin painting at Halloween; going together to theater, dance and athletic events; goodie bags at the holidays; a winter party before finals; a snowman lunch; and special events featuring the college mascot, the falcon.

When students have problems, the issues are reported to the executive vice president for enrollment, who immediately contacts an appropriate staff or faculty member to address them. The staff retention committee and the Faculty Committee on Admissions and Retention receive information about student concerns, and yearly student evaluations of the program help to modify plans for the following year.

Cedar Crest has been particularly concerned about retaining students in the natural sciences. For many years we have focused on counteracting the national shortage of women in the sciences.

Students' comments about the Staff/Freshman Mentor Program:

"My mentor was always sending me little cards and e-mails telling me about events or just checking in to see how I was doing. I knew that if I ever had any problems I could call, e-mail or just stop by and she would always be there. She answered my questions honestly and with a positive attitude. She made all the events fun and enjoyable. She always had a smile on her face that even on my worst days could cheer me up."

✦

"I want to do it next year, too. It's great to feel that someone is watching out for you."

✦

"I found this to be a really good program because it gave me another resource if I needed one. It also gave me the opportunity to relax and do fun things with a different group of students than I have in my classes."

✦

"My mentor is easy to talk with. I'm comfortable with her. It is nice to know I had someone I could always count on in my corner."

Always strong in biology, the college opened the first undergraduate genetic engineering program in the country in 1983 and stood at the forefront of this new field. Since then, additional majors have been added in neuroscience, bioinformatics, biodiversity and forensics.

The following discussion offers information about retention of students entering the sciences in 1999, the year of the largest enrollment — and the highest attrition — in the college's history. Our retention rates in the sciences have improved dramatically, and we believe our experience can offer useful insights to other colleges seeking to address attrition in the sciences.

Our retention rates in the sciences have improved dramatically, and we believe our experience can offer useful insights.

Most freshmen planning to declare a major within the Department of Chemical and Physical Sciences take Biology 121. Performance in this course is a good indicator of future success. On the first day of class in 1999, all students who enrolled in Biology 121 were asked to list their intended majors. Of the total enrollment of 117, 106 indicated they would major in the natural sciences. The largest group within that category was biology (35) — with genetic engineering (33) a close second. Thirteen students listed pre-med. Chemistry, biochemistry, general science and nutrition polled in the single digits.

Four years later we have learned that only 39 percent (41 students) of the students in that Biology 121 class actually graduated in 2003 with a major in the natural sciences. Another 19 of the students completed degrees in other areas, and 49 left the college sometime before graduation. A total of 60 Fall 1999 entrants graduated four years later.

Records of the 49 students who left are revealing. Twelve had withdrawn from the course before the end of the semester. Of students who completed the course, 26 had grades below C-. Of those who switched to other major areas, 71 percent had an average grade of C-. Of the 41 who actually earned a degree in science, no one had withdrawn from Biology 121 before the end of the semester, and no one received a grade lower than C. In fact, the average grade in this course of the successful science graduates was B+.

As a frame of reference, the National Science Board Committee on Education and Human Resources indicates that the national average graduation rate for students intending to major in science and engineering is less than 50 percent. Unfortunately, for the class entering in 1999, the graduation rate was 39 percent, significantly below the national average. However, this high attrition rate is not affected by family income — a crucial fact. In none of the analyses of retention in the sciences is family income a significant variable. Students succeeded or failed, stayed or left, in a pattern not predictable by family income.

If we look more closely at the Cedar Crest experience of the 41 who graduated in the sciences — and at other successful science students at the college — we do, however, find a correlation between their success and their involvement in undergraduate research. Since 1990, 149 science students have directed — under faculty supervision — research programs for other undergraduates. Of those, 146 — 97 percent — graduated in the natural sciences in four years. All of the 10 students from the Biology 121 class in 1999 who participated in independent research before their senior years graduated with majors in the natural sciences in four years. Of the 21 students in that same class who participated in one or more summer research internships, all graduated in four years with majors in the natural sciences.

All Cedar Crest science majors are encouraged to do scientific research during their sophomore and junior years. Students who have research

experience are more than four times as likely to secure summer research internships and three times more likely to present their work at scientific meetings than science students who do not do research. Students who have a significant amount of research experience, including one or more internships and scientific presentations, also tend to receive more and better offers from employers and graduate programs with reputations as high-profile as Princeton, Cornell and Harvard.

We draw several encouraging conclusions from our Cedar Crest experience. First, a recruitment strategy focused on attracting a broad and diverse student population can be successful in enrolling low-income students without especially focusing on them. Second, family income level is not a significant variable in predicting success for students at Cedar Crest. Third, personal attention by nonacademic personnel on a frequent and regular basis, one on one and in small groups, can improve retention rates for all students. Fourth, retention of science students can be significantly improved by offering students hands-on research experiences and opportunities to direct other students' research under the guidance of faculty. Finally, a truly student-centered learning culture is the most successful environment for all students.

Dorothy Blaney, president
Cedar Crest College

Note: Judy Neyhart, Executive Vice President for Enrollment, and Alan Hale, Chair of Biology, co-authored.

Claflin University: Raise the bar for all

Claflin University was founded in 1869 to provide access to promising students who needed educational and intellectual opportunity. Its founders were humanitarians — courageous men with vision who embedded this philosophy in the institution. Claflin today reflects their vision.

The mission of the institution is congruent with this vision and commits the university to "providing a Christian, caring, open, nurturing, concerned and supportive multicultural environment for teaching, research and service to the community and the world" in which "students are our first priority." Consequently, Claflin graduates are leaders who are "highly productive citizens ... in their respective discipline, community and world."

Claflin is a private, four-year, historically black university affiliated with the United Methodist Church. It is a comprehensive institution that offers undergraduate degrees in 32 areas as well as a Master of Business Administration program. Underpinning our undergraduate program are the core curriculum and several Centers for Excellence: the Center for Excellence in Science and Mathematics, the Center for Excellence in

Location: Orangeburg, S.C.
President: Henry Tisdale
Affiliation: United Methodist Church, historically black
Undergraduate enrollment: 1,570

Summary: In only five years, Claflin University has dramatically improved retention rates and diversified the student body by overhauling its admissions and recruiting policies. An enormously successful capital campaign generated funds for financial aid, student services, physical renovation and faculty/staff development.

Teaching, the Freshman College, the Center for Vocational Reflection, the South Carolina Biotechnology Center, and the Alice Carson Tisdale Honors College. The current enrollment is 1,570; the student/faculty ratio is 14:1. Tuition for 2003-2004 was $15,422.

About 96 percent of the students receive some form of merit- or need-based financial aid. Seventy percent come from families with annual incomes of less than $25,000, yet the retention rate is 79 percent — a 30 percent improvement in five years. The six-year graduation rate is 70 percent.

In the mid-1990s, Claflin was a very different institution. In 1994-1995, total enrollment was 1,023. Of the 853 freshman applicants, 284 enrolled. All but 50 were from South Carolina; three were international students. Their average SAT total score was 700. That year Claflin awarded nearly $6 million in financial aid, less than $500,000 of which was institutional. The first year retention rate was less than 50 percent; the four-year graduation rate was less than 20 percent. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked the university in its fourth tier.

In the planning cycle that began in 1995, the university articulated a new vision, a realigned mission and a set of strategic goals designed to take the institution to the next level. The framework — committed to excellence, valuing people, a customer focus, quality education and financial responsibility — informed and guided all policies and programs. The strategic goals included student development, faculty and program development, resource development, improvement of quality of life, outreach, strategic planning and assessment.

Accordingly, the 1995-2000 operational plan realigned Claflin's admissions policies. We strengthened the admissions criteria with specific requirements for minimum GPA, high school subject credits and standardized test scores. Our recruitment plan expanded intellectual, geographic and ethnic diversity without neglecting social and economic diversity. Recruitment expanded to the Northeast, the Midwest and the West, as well as to the Caribbean, Africa and Asia.

However, casting a wider net did not mean neglecting our traditional base. Claflin created a database of high schools from which it had drawn many students and nurtured relationships with those schools. We also introduced partial tuition waivers to honors students from local high schools and cemented transfer relationships with technical colleges. Establishing the Community Higher Education Council facilitated cross-registration with South Carolina State University and Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College. Further, the university developed summer programs that target middle school and high school students through GEAR UP and TRIO, among others.

The Honors College offers a stimulating and academically rigorous learning environment.

A key contribution to academic quality, diversity and retention was the 1994 founding of the Honors College. A prestigious unit within the university, the Honors College offers a stimulating and academically rigorous learning environment for students who have demonstrated academic excellence, leadership potential and a penchant for service. Current standards require that eligible incoming freshmen have a GPA of at least 3.3 and a combined score of 1,000 on the SAT. (The program's original SAT eligibility standard was 850.) Continuing students are admitted to the Honors College on the basis of their academic performance at Claflin.

Significantly, the honors class of 2006 had an average SAT score of 1,100, an increase of more than 250 points since the program's inception, and an average GPA of 3.6. Students in the Honors College must maintain a 3.3 GPA, participate in campus clubs and organizations, display leadership ability and perform 50 hours of community

service. Today, 15 percent of the student body is affiliated with the Honors College; their sustained impact is evident throughout the university.

The university realized in 1995 that transforming the student profile would require financial aid. Therefore, Claflin established the Presidential Scholarship Program, the Honors College Scholarships and the Dean's Scholarships to attract high-achieving students and Diversity Scholarships to attract a better variety of students. The capital campaign sought external funds to establish more endowed scholarships. Financial aid for 2002-2003 shows the university's commitment to its transformation. Total financial aid awarded exceeded $13 million, more than twice the amount awarded in 1994-1995. Institutional awards quadrupled over the same period.

Claflin also reworked its existing freshman program into the Freshman College. Recognized by the Templeton Foundation as an exemplary program, the Freshman College coordinates placement, orientation, advising, counseling, tutoring, mentoring and an active intervention program for struggling students.

Freshman College also offers a particularly moving parting ceremony, during which a freshman's family offers the child to the Claflin family. In the spring, another ceremony marks passage to the sophomore year. During their first week on campus, students attend an off-campus retreat; this is one of the factors that accounts for our sharp improvement in first-year retention. Other highlights include student mentors and learning university history through a yearlong orientation class taught by the president and vice presidents. As president, I began to offer Thursday-afternoon office hours for any student to voice a concern — a practice that has greatly enhanced the campus climate.

Working in tandem with the Freshman College is the Student Outreach for Academic Retention (SOAR) Center, an innovative facility that combines a range of student support services. The SOAR Center houses Student Support Services, Upward Bound, and the Upward Bound Math and Science Regional Center. The SOAR Center also assists with discipline-specific programs such as Call Me Mister, a national model for recruiting, retaining and graduating minority male teachers.

In accordance with the Strategic Plan and Master Plan: Claflin 2000 and Beyond, we have added new buildings and renovated existing ones in a major effort that has transformed the physical plant. The most notable is the construction of the Kliest Living and Learning Center, a handsome complex that includes a residential tower, a student center and the Leadership Development Center that houses the Honors College. The residence halls have been air-conditioned and renovated. The new campus wall features a prize-winning entrance. The restoration of Ministers Hall has won a state historic preservation award. Other buildings are being renovated, and a $15 million residential complex is under construction. Claflin has been renewed on the outside and the inside, and students feel good about that.

Claflin has been renewed on the outside and the inside, and students feel good about that.

How has Claflin University done all this? By raising funds more aggressively than ever. Starting in 1996 with the Case for Claflin, a $20 million capital campaign that actually raised $30 million, the endowment has nearly doubled. Endowed scholarships have been established, and the physical plant has been dramatically upgraded. These initiatives have fueled Claflin's climb to the next level — where vital initiatives do not depend on soft money.

In conjunction with strategic planning, Claflin has committed to its Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan, an annual cycle of assessments that draw from the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), the Institutional Priorities Survey (IPS) and

the Senior Exit Survey. The SSI was last administered in Fall 2002 to 563 students. Its results were encouraging. It showed significant improvement since 2000 in all of the scaled areas, a clear indication of functional enhancement and institutional effectiveness. Areas of particular strength identified by the students on the SSI are student-centeredness, academic advising, campus support services, campus climate and instructional effectiveness, all of which exceed national norms. These findings are reinforced by data collected through the IPS and the Senior Survey, a convergence that indicates an effective and unified institution.

These outcomes can be traced directly to the university's outstanding faculty and staff. The Case for Claflin introduced a continuing emphasis on faculty and staff development that has maintained our very low turnover rate. We offer competitive salaries as well as opportunities for professional development through, for instance, the Center for Excellence in Teaching.

Another significant part of Claflin's development has been the deliberate nurturing and recognition of the "star performers" at commencement, at the Honors and Awards Day, at the annual Rewards and Recognition celebration, at the Faculty Excellence Event and through the university's publications.

The evolution of Claflin University has been purposeful, and the results are gratifying. The typical freshman today has graduated in the top half of his or her class with a GPA of 3.0 or better and with an SAT score of 950, up more than 100 points in the last five years. Of particular interest is the apparent lack of correlation between family income and student persistence, a signal that Claflin is the right choice for more economically advantaged students as well as those from lower-income families.

Today 84 percent of Claflin students are from South Carolina, and 16 percent are from 24 other states and 14 countries. Approximately 5 percent of the students are international; 3.5 percent are white and 91.5 percent African-American. We have received 2,500 applications for the class of 2007, three times the number in the mid-'90s. Many more students and many more diverse students want to come to Claflin than ever before.

The typical graduate today has performed community service; about 20 percent have had an off-campus internship; a third of them go on to graduate or professional school; and 38 percent feel strongly enough about their experience at Claflin to give back to their alma mater. This fundamental and sustained transformation has led *U.S. News & World Report* recognition as a "Top Five" and "Best Buy," designations we take in stride as we continue to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Henry Tisdale, president
Claflin University

Dillard University: Mission, maintenance and growth

Serving low-income students is central to the 134-year-old mission of Dillard University. Like most historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Dillard's two predecessor institutions — Straight College and New Orleans University — were founded after the Civil War to provide advanced educational opportunities for the newly freed slaves. These recently emancipated students were eager to learn, but they and their families did not have the resources to fully fund their education themselves. In the early days, therefore, without the support of the federal government, Northern churches and philanthropists were the primary sources of scholarship support. It is hardly surprising, then, that by the second decade of the 20th century — with the Civil War a receding memory — Straight and New Orleans University were in deep financial difficulty, nearly bankrupt and facing the prospect of closing despite strong demand.

In the midst of this crisis, Edgar B. Stern, son-in-law of Sears, Roebuck and Co. founder and generous educational philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, stepped in and proposed the merger of the two foundering institutions. In 1935, Dillard

Location: New Orleans, La.
President: Michael Lomax
Affiliation: Historically black, faith-based
Undergraduate enrollment: 2,380

Summary: In 1997, Dillard University undertook an effort to position itself among the best historically black colleges and universities as it sought increased enrollment without neglecting the low-income students who have been central to the university's mission. Changes in its admissions, financial aid and support service policies have contributed to Dillard's success.

University opened to its first freshman class on a new campus and with modern academic facilities. Although the school's resources were significantly greater as a result of renewed philanthropic support, Dillard shared one marked feature with its predecessors: The majority of its students came from financially struggling families who could little afford a private undergraduate education. Dillard therefore had to rely on limited endowment income, private philanthropy, church support and, after 1947, annual distributions from the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to assist the majority of its students.

By the early 1990s, Dillard's finances, like those of a number of HBCUs, were precarious; several disturbing trends combined to present a daunting challenge for the university. Because most students came from low-income households and relied heavily on federal grants and loans to finance their college educations, tuition and fees were kept artificially depressed. In addition, the discount rate was high, and collecting outstanding balances was a perennial challenge. Dillard's modest endowment — along with reliable support from the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ and UNCF — helped to keep lean budgets balanced. Funds were not sufficient, however, to attract and retain strong faculty or to invest in the physical plant, which contributed to a flat enrollment, a declining quality in the student profile and substantial deferred maintenance. If Dillard was to reverse these trends while remaining true to its mission, it had to take bold action.

In the summer of 1997, at the beginning of a new administration, we decided that Dillard's future could improve significantly if we could reposition ourselves as a leading HBCU — a peer of successful schools such as Morehouse and Spelman in Atlanta, Hampton in Virginia and Xavier in New Orleans. That required more than marketing. We would have to modernize and upgrade the campus, strengthen the faculty and academic programs and re-engage core constituencies, including alumni, donors and friends. Significant investments were needed but required more net revenue. We recognized that, in the short term, we needed to increase the size of the student body and ensure collection of tuition and fees.

The tasks seemed overwhelming, but good news was on the horizon. Demographics were in our favor, as a surge in African-American high school graduates was predicted for the new century. Also, a palpable interest in HBCUs was awakening in this new generation of prospective students and their families, who wanted a nurturing educational environment and a strong academic program. The HBCUs that meet these expectations, we reasoned, would become strong competitors for black high school graduates.

We decided that Dillard's future could improve significantly if we could reposition ourselves as a leading HBCU.

In Fall 1997, Dillard embarked on a strategic plan that aimed to increase total enrollment from 1,500 students to 3,000 over a 10-year period. Embedded in that ambitious goal was the intent to attract better-prepared students from across the nation — not just from our region —and to build an academic experience that merited increased tuition. We also recognized that we would need to collect tuition more aggressively while remaining faithful to our mission of educating significant numbers of first-generation college students from low- to moderate-income households.

Six years later, Dillard has made significant progress. Applications for admission have grown from 1,600 in 1996 to more than 3,600 in 2003. Total enrollment has grown from 1,548 in 1997 to 2,380 in Fall 2003 — a 54 percent increase. Rather than drawing students exclusively from the region, today Dillard attracts students from 41 states and

17 foreign countries. Over this period, the quality of the student body has improved. The average grade point average of entering freshmen has risen from 2.2 in 1996 to 3.5 in 2003; during the same period, the average ACT has increased from 18 to 23, which is above the national average for all test takers and sharply higher than average for African-Americans. The retention rate from freshman to sophomore year has risen from 58 percent in 1996 to 78 percent in 2002, and the graduation rate has increased from 29 percent to 38 percent. With all of this dramatic change, however, other statistics have remained unchanged: More than 60 percent of our students are eligible for Pell Grants, and 40 percent are first-generation college students. In this period of dynamic transformation, Dillard remains consistent with its century-old role as a point of entry into higher education for low- to moderate-income, first-generation African-American students.

In 1997, Dillard overhauled its entire student recruitment and financial aid program to better execute the enrollment plan. We moved recruitment and admissions, financial aid, and the registrar into one enrollment-management operation. We invested in more staff and in their professional development, and we improved publications and recruiting tools. We also reviewed all financial aid policies and operations to ensure their alignment with the goals of attracting more and better students and producing more revenue.

Between 1997 and 2003, Dillard increased annual scholarship aid from $2.6 million to $5.5 million, moving the discount rate from 23 percent to 28 percent to fund the increase. We intend to lower that rate to 25 percent over the next five-year planning cycle. Accounts receivable have fallen from 16.9 percent in 1999 to 2 percent at the end of the 2002, and the student loan default rate fell from 19 percent in 1994 to 12 percent in 2003.

Though it is too early to declare victory, we at Dillard are proud of our significant growth — and are equally proud of remaining true to our commitment to low-income students, who remain the largest group of our student population. Consider that in Fall 2002, 1,459 of the 2,225 students enrolled at Dillard (66 percent) were eligible for Pell Grants. Of the 660 first-year students enrolled that fall, 343 (52 percent) reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid that they came from families with yearly incomes of $25,000 or less. Additionally, half of the 2003 graduates reported household incomes of $25,000 or less, roughly the same proportion as other Dillard graduating classes over the preceding five years. These numbers suggest that we have found ways to attract, support and retain low-income students while dramatically improving quality.

> We at Dillard are **proud** of our significant growth — and are equally proud of remaining **true** to our commitment to **low-income** students.

Although Dillard does not intentionally seek students from low-income households, our newly energized recruiting program has targeted over the last six years high school graduates in urban districts across the country that have significant percentages of African-American students. Through direct mail, high school visits, campus open houses, and the efforts of a team of full-time professional recruiters who work specific markets, we strive to recruit high-performing students, regardless of family finances. We also have increased the number of alumni chapters, which assist these efforts through recruitment programs that encourage local students to consider Dillard. We also encourage students and their families to visit campus and to get to know our admissions staff. We strengthen those relationships through frequent e-mails and

phone calls, all of which builds trust and comfort between the university and the families of prospective students.

We believe that students who make a seamless transition from high school to the academic, social and financial responsibilities of college are more likely to persist and succeed at Dillard. Therefore, we focus on these issues with each individual student. Knowing that about half of our students come from families with very low household incomes and that a disproportionate number will be the first in their families to attend college, we believe our initial concentration on academic preparation assessments will raise the likelihood of their success.

Recruiters and admissions counselors therefore use a need-blind policy so that recruitment efforts focus on students who, regardless of economic status, have demonstrated in high school a commitment to academics and preparation for the rigorous challenges of the Dillard undergraduate experience. Our decisions to admit students and to award scholarships are based on high school grade point average, standardized test results, recommendations and, increasingly, on personal interviews conducted by recruiters and alumni.

Dillard has eight levels of scholarship awards, ranging from $1,000 a year to the University Scholars award that covers full tuition, room and board ($16,000 in 2003-2004). In 2002-2003, nine of the 50 University Scholars reported household incomes of $25,000 or less. Their average income was $12,900. In the same year, 27 of the 81 Presidential Scholars who earned full-tuition awards reported household income of $25,000 or less. Their average income was less than $12,000.

History tells us that even Dillard's strongest academic performers who have received the maximum financial award often face daunting economic challenges. Indirect costs of education, such as transportation, remain problematic. Therefore, all students who seek or receive financial aid, including scholarship recipients, must apply for all public aid for which they are eligible and must then apply all aid they receive toward their direct educational expenses. In addition, all scholarship recipients are required to apply for any private financial support for which the university deems them eligible, so that limited institutional funds can be distributed to as many eligible students as possible. Every year Dillard students win hundreds of thousands of dollars in awards from UNCF alone. Because most of these awards are merit-based, competing for them reinforces the university's commitment to reward its highest-performing students first. This emphasis is evident in our graduates: About half report a household income of $25,000 or less and graduate with a 2.96 GPA.

More than 90 percent of Dillard students require financial aid in the form of grants and loans.

More than 90 percent of Dillard students require financial aid in the form of grants and loans. Although our tuition of $10,600 is modest by private institution standards, it is high for the half of our student body whose families earn less than $25,000. Therefore we work consistently and persistently with each student to fully explain the financial realities. Together students, families, and Dillard develop individual annual financial plans that help families negotiate the challenging economic terrain. Developing these plans is a painstaking and time-consuming process that requires a financial aid officer to work with each student and his or her family.

After six years as president at Dillard, I am convinced that the single most important ingredient for success is understanding the individual needs of all of our students and addressing them, to the fullest extent possible, as they individually require. Faculty advising and a wide array of student life services have always addressed the academic and social dimensions of our students. We are increasingly aware, however,

that we must also proactively and persistently address financial concerns and tailor programs to meet each particular student's needs.

For a significant percentage of our students and their families, college is an unfamiliar experience. But even when it is not unfamiliar, students and their families may not have considered fully the challenges of meeting their financial obligations. Left to themselves, they all too often avoid, delay or evade these challenges. In the past, too many put off until the fall considering how and when they will pay their tuition and fees. To counter these bad habits, Dillard must take the initiative. If our students are to persist, we must initiate communication with them so we can guide them and their families through the financial aid maze, including ensuring that they understand their responsibilities.

Loans are a significant component of the financial aid package of a Dillard student, as the accompanying chart illustrates for low-income students:

Federal funds		**69.11%**
Loans	42.79%	
Grants	24.07%	
Work assistance	2.25%	
Institutional funds		20.55%
State funds		2.21%
External funds		8.14%
Total $25K population		100.00%

Although programs such as our Support our Students scholarship, which pairs scholarship donors directly with high-performing upperclassmen, continue to increase external funds, Dillard students must accept some debt to meet their financial obligations. At Dillard we consider this to be good debt because it carries a significant return on the investment in the form of increased lifetime earnings.

The economic realities facing Dillard and most of its students and families are harsh. Dillard has very few endowed scholarships. Exceptional academic performers continue to receive competitive scholarship support from us, but most students rely on federal grants and loans. We believe, however, that they are making a wise, long-term decision by investing in a quality undergraduate education. Although HBCUs enroll approximately 3 percent of African-American undergraduates, they account for a third of all black college graduates. Consequently, many black students feel that HBCUs are a proven route to a college education. Therefore, although the cost of tuition at a private institution such as Dillard is higher than at a public institution, the probability of actually completing the degree and of going on for further education is greater for African-American, low-income, first-generation students who attend Dillard and other HBCUs than it is for similar students attending other institutions.

We counsel our students and families to work closely with the financial aid office so they can better understand college costs, plan how to meet them and seek assistance with problems. We emphasize the long-term financial benefits of earning an undergraduate degree and work diligently to help meet financial obligations. Because we believe that students and their families must comprehend and be committed to the realities of realizing a Dillard education, we encourage a view of financial obligations as a responsibility shared among the university, the family and the student.

In the ideal world, ample resources would underwrite the college education of every aspiring student regardless of the institution. In the real world, unfortunately, those resources are highly limited. The student who chooses Dillard has every right to expect scholarship support based on academic performance. In turn, Dillard expects every student to perform to capacity and work responsibly with the university to develop and execute an effective financing plan. It may be difficult and require sacrifice, but the benefits to the student are clear, and the shared responsibility is non-negotiable. This approach may not work for

all institutions and all students, but it has shown promising results at Dillard. We believe in accessible private educational opportunities for all students, but we also know that our students and their families must share the cost of this valuable education.

Michael Lomax, president
Dillard University

Chart 1

Number of graduates reporting family income of $25,000 or less

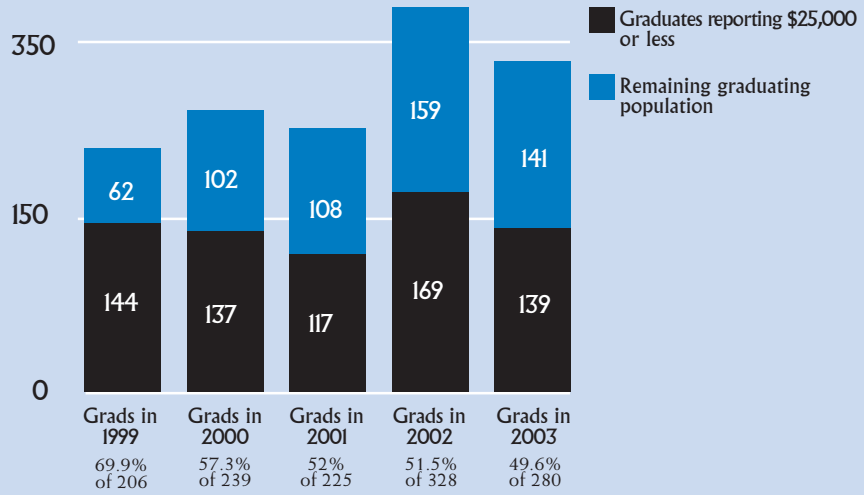
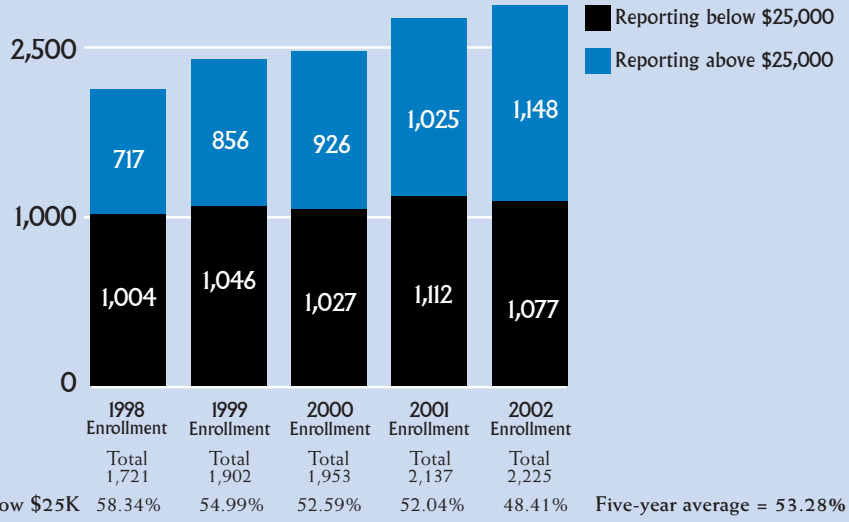


Chart 2

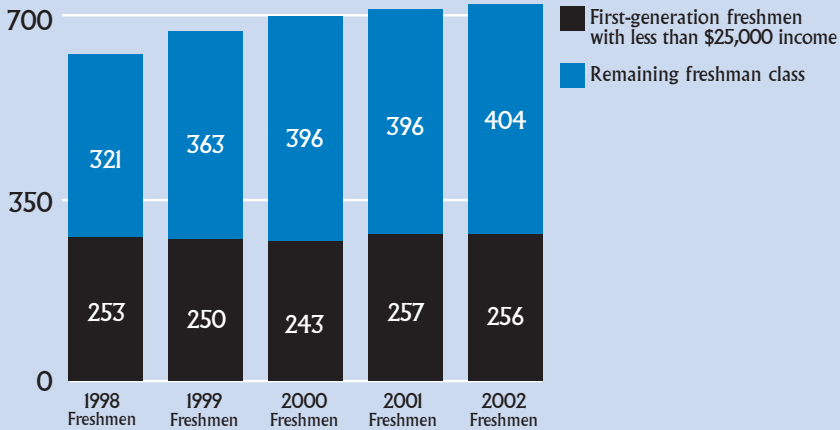
Number of students reporting family income of $25,000 or less



Average below $25K 58.34% 54.99% 52.59% 52.04% 48.41% Five-year average = 53.28%

Chart 3

Number of freshmen reporting first-generation status and family income of $25,000 or less



Average first-generation below $25K 44.08% 40.78% 38.03% 39.36% 38.79% Five-year average = 40.21%

Berea College: Planning for retention

Berea College is unique. The Berea schools (elementary and secondary) were founded in 1855, and the college was chartered in 1859 as the South's first interracial and coeducational college. Berea founder John Fee, a Kentucky abolitionist, grounded his Christian faith in the inclusive belief that "God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth" (Acts 17:26). Fee believed that only education could move economically and racially oppressed men and women toward equality. Accordingly, Berea's first students were emancipated slaves and economically depressed people from the mountains of eastern Kentucky and nearby states. The Berea schools' focus on these two underserved Southern Appalachian groups in the mid-19th century resulted in three defining characteristics. First, the early curriculum was both practical and liberal arts-focused. Moreover, because few students could afford to pay, Berea introduced a no-tuition policy in the early 1890s. To compensate for costs, all students were required to work at tasks that sustained the college. From the very beginning, learning, labor and service were conceived as the three essential components of a well-rounded Berea education.

Location: Berea, Ky.
President: Larry Shinn
Affiliation: Nondenominational Christian
Undergraduate enrollment: 2,380

Summary: Berea College, unique in its long-standing no-tuition policy, achieved two important goals — raising retention and graduation rates and recruiting more African-American students — in only seven years through a variety of interdepartmental collaborations. Berea's experience demonstrates the importance of internal institutional research and assessment as well as consideration of national research.

Berea today remains faithful to its founding principles. Eighty percent of its students come from Kentucky and mountainous areas of eight other Southern Appalachian states; families pay no tuition; all students are required to work at least 10 hours per week in one of 120 campus labor departments; and nearly all Berea students come from the bottom 35 percent of the socioeconomic strata of families in Appalachia. Thus, Berea College continues to provide access for talented, low-income students and to challenge them with a high-quality liberal arts and pre-professional education.

By the early 1990s, however, Berea's success in attracting and retaining qualified students was not meeting its past performance. Berea's admissions program was faltering. The freshman-to-sophomore retention rate hovered around 70 percent, bottoming out at 64.6 percent in 1996. Additionally, Berea's five-year graduation rate was approximately 50 percent (which dropped to 46.7 percent for the class of 1996).[6] This essay will describe how the college successfully addressed these admissions, retention and graduation challenges through a strategic planning process. This process made retention and graduation success a central issue for Berea College; it also allocated resources to identify potential areas for improvement and selected six such areas: admissions, advising, academic support, new student orientation, first-year curriculum, and improved research and assessment measures. Meanwhile, the college also sought to increase the number of African-American students on campus to better meet its historic mission of interracial education.

The various actions initiated in the 1995-1996 strategic planning process resulted in an average increase of more than 10 percent (more than 15 percent from the 1996 lows) in retention and graduation rates. For example, the freshman class of 2003 had an overall freshman-to-sophomore retention rate of 79 percent, and the senior class of 2003 had a five-year graduation rate of 60 percent. These significantly improved retention and graduation rates occurred while Berea more than doubled the number of African-American students — from 8 percent in 1996 to 18 percent in 2003. This essay describes the strategic planning process and the efforts of many people at Berea College that made these significant gains possible.

Berea seeks diversity in a number of ways, including a balanced gender distribution, but it is especially devoted to African-American youth.

The first of Berea's eight Great Commitments is "to provide an educational opportunity primarily for students from Appalachia, black and white, who have great promise and limited economic resources." This short statement is rooted in the college's founding charter and has directed Berea's admissions programs throughout its history (except during a 46-year hiatus from 1904 to 1950, when Kentucky prohibited interracial education). Components of this core aspect of Berea's mission drive the college's admissions and student life planning. Berea admits 80 percent of its first-year class from 219 mountain counties of eight Southern Appalachian states and all of Kentucky. It seeks diversity in a number of ways, including a balanced gender distribution, but it is especially devoted to African-American youth. All Berea students, however, must have demonstrated economic need and, most importantly, the ability to engage successfully with our excellent curriculum.

Although this essay particularly focuses on students with family incomes less than $25,000, we at Berea College believe that virtually all of our students meet the implicit Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) low-income criterion. The median family income for all Berea students in 2002-2003 was just over $25,000; however, 100 percent of Berea students qualified for need-based aid, and

approximately 85 percent qualified for Pell Grants. Another 9 percent were international students, who are automatically ineligible for federal financial aid. To determine financial eligibility for admission and to establish a family's ability to contribute toward the cost of room, board and fees at Berea, we focus on a family's capacity to pay rather than on income data alone. For example, a family of three with an income of $25,000 is better able to pay than a family of six with a $30,000 income.

Berea uses the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) — determined by the federal government's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) — to establish admissions eligibility and the term bill, which includes room, board, books and student fees. The term bill *minus* expected student income from summer and school-year earnings *equals* the largest allowable EFC. For example, if all term bill charges total $6,900 and a student's wages must produce $2,100 from labor, the highest allowable EFC to be eligible for admission to Berea is $4,800. Any student whose FAFSA reports an EFC greater than $4,800 is ineligible for admission.

This stipulation means that Berea College's mission of serving only students with "limited economic resources" closely approximates the $25,000 family income limitation for the CIC's best practices. In fact, after segmenting out the Berea College student families whose income is $25,000 or lower from those that were higher, we discovered no discernible difference in ACT scores and retention rates between the two groups from1996 to 2001. We have only three years of comparative data on five-year graduation rates by family income; two of the three years show about a 5 percent lower graduation rate for students from families with incomes under $25,000. Interestingly, retention for African-American students during this six-year period shows a 6 percent higher freshman-to-sophomore rate for those with family incomes under $25,000 (84 percent) than for those above that level (78 percent). Nonetheless, eight years of data indicate that reporting on students whose family income is under $25,000 (about 46 percent of Berea's total student body) is virtually the same as reporting on *all* Berea College students. This discussion, however, will focus on those earning less than $25,000. Some of this data is more than 10 years old; comparable statistics for students from families who earned more than $25,000 cannot be retrieved from those years.

Current studies on family income and student postsecondary success clearly demonstrate that family income significantly affects retention and graduation rates. For example, the six-year national baccalaureate graduation rate for students with family incomes under $25,000 was 46.8 percent; for those earning $25,001 to 45,000, the rate was 52.3 percent; for those earning $45,001 to $70,000, the rate was 59.7 percent; and for those with family incomes above $70,000, the graduation rate was 67.5 percent. However, Clifford Adelman's 1999 study, *Answers in the Toolbox: Academic Intensity Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment*, shows that other variables are often equally important. Adelman concludes, "Academic Resources (the composite of high school curriculum, test scores and class rank) produce a much steeper curve toward bachelor's degree completion than does socioeconomic status."

> Studies clearly demonstrate that **family income** significantly affects **retention** and **graduation** rates.

Berea's recent experience confirms Adelman's conclusion. When we offered admission to students with better "academic resources" than others who had equal financial need, we discovered a key to improving our retention and graduation success. We also learned that low-income or poverty status may affect education more with regard to low self-esteem, truncated

educational vision or motivation and such non-quantifiable dimensions of learning-preparedness than with regard to lack of money and material possessions per se.

Like most colleges, Berea College often engages in long-range planning processes to revive the mission and desired goals outlined in dust-covered documents. Although a new governance system in 1989 created a strategic planning committee (SPC) — appointed and headed by the president — the committee did not meet until 1994, when faculty representatives were elected to fill more than half of the positions. The newly reconstituted SPC produced the 1996 strategic plan entitled *Being and Becoming: Berea College in the 21st Century*. One significant difference between long-range plans and strategic plans is that the latter look very seriously at a college's external environment and prioritize initiatives that blend mission with external opportunity (or threat). After an honest and thorough inward and outward investigation in 1995-1996, we turned to our Appalachian, Christian, admissions, fiscal and community commitments. Hence, one of the five strategic questions of *Being and Becoming* was "Who should Berea College seek to serve?"

The answer was a reaffirmation and further explication of the first Great Commitment:

> **Berea College should seek to recruit students mostly from Appalachia, black and white, men and women, (a) who have limited economic resources, (b) whose "great promise" is defined by significant potential for academic excellence with assistance appropriate to Berea's character and means, and by personal qualities consistent with Berea's Great Commitments, (c) who will be attracted by Berea's clearly articulated emphasis on learning, labor and service as worthy educational and personal goals and (d) who will represent a diverse cultural and ethnic mix that will create a 21st century learning environment."**

Defining "limited economic resources" and relating "academic excellence" to retention and graduation took months of debate. Our recruiting emphasis on African-American and international students helped address our commitment to diversity. A special initiative to serve at once 40 single-parent families evolved from Berea's historic mission and contemporary needs in Appalachia and the world beyond.

The college was especially obligated to strengthening interracial education. As the South's first interracial and coeducational college, half of Berea's student population was African-American for its first 50 years. When Charles Day introduced the "Day Law" — which forbade interracial education in Kentucky — Berea fought it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1908, when Berea lost its case, the school used part of its endowment to found the all-black Lincoln Academy in Shelbyville, Ky. The Day Law was repealed in 1950, but until 1990, Berea resembled other liberal arts colleges in the region. African-Americans constituted only 3 percent to 8 percent of the student population. Although our new admissions initiatives sought no particular targets, they sought to re-establish our historic interracial focus.

Yet not everyone agreed that Berea had a retention or graduation problem or that better rates could be expected from students in the lower-income groups that we serve. To address these complicated questions, the SPC created in the fall of 1996 an eight-person retention subcommittee that included faculty, students, the associate dean (who focused on student progress), a student life representative and our institutional research director. The 1997 *Report of the Retention Subcommittee* sought "to recommend new programs, policies, and actions ... that will help the college achieve effective retention and first-year strategies coordinated across academic, residential, administrative and other college boundaries."

The subcommittee decided that Berea did not have a retention problem. The 10-year average (1986-1995) retention rate of 74 percent was fairly

consistent with that of recent decades, although it was down from historic average highs of 85 percent in the 1960s. The 10-year graduation rate of 56 percent (for six years) compared to the national average of 57 percent for four-year liberal arts colleges. The subcommittee noted that the average graduation rates masked some significant differences in student cohorts. For example, international students had an average six-year graduation rate of 80 percent, whereas 50 percent of our "in-territory" students — 80 percent of our students — graduated in six years. The subcommittee's 30-page report compared the national literature to Berea's experience with academic preparedness and qualitative issues, such as self-esteem and motivation, commonly associated with students of low socioeconomic status. The report concluded that Berea's retention rates paralleled those predicted by ACT scores. Studies of other academic measures reached the same conclusion.

The subcommittee concluded that "increased student retention is one possible outcome of enhanced programming; however, it is not in itself the goal. The major goal is to improve the quality of students' experiences that may lead to increased retention." Nonetheless, the subcommittee's substantial, ambitious and far-ranging recommendations included the following: (1) increasing freshman-to-sophomore retention to between 80 and 85 percent by 1998 and increasing the graduation rate to 65 to 70 percent by 2002; (2) removing structural barriers such as an eight-term maximum that created artificial impediments to success; (3) improving admissions by focusing on students' academic resources and motivation for collegiate study; (4) significantly improving adviser preparation; (5) improving the first-year curriculum (i.e., access, support, cogency); (6) improving the physical condition of residence halls and the student life policies that govern them; (7) improving links between the labor program and the college's educational aims; (8) providing more and better support services for African-American students, and (9) improving the data collection and use associated with student progress and satisfaction.

In the fall of 1997, the subcommittee delivered its report on student retention to an administrative dean's committee that would implement the recommendations. This committee comprised the academic vice president and provost, the dean of the faculty, the vice president for labor and student life, the registrar, the director of admissions and the associate provost for student progress (a new position that replaced the retired associate dean). Six months later, the dean's committee presented a "Student Retention Update Report" to the college community and trustees. Additional data and analyses led the committee to adopt a new tone, expressing concern "that the average freshman-to-sophomore retention rate has dropped below 70 percent in the last five years (1992-1996) as compared to a 75 percent average rate in the prior five years (1987-1991)." The report continued, "We are also concerned about the graduation rates of our students. According to national data, the average five-year graduation rate is currently at 56.6 percent for private institutions ... Berea's most current five-year graduation rate is 50.1 percent." Improving retention and graduation rates and initiatives were now a clear priority.

Increased student retention is one possible outcome of enhanced programming; however, it is not in itself the goal.

The dean's committee stated that the 1997 subcommittee report was the first to analyze sufficient data by comparing it with national data in ways that could suggest directions for our efforts to improve graduation and retention rates. Both the subcommittee and the dean's committee argued that retention is a complex blend of academic,

residential, co-curricular, financial and personal factors. Admissions seemed to be the appropriate starting point.

Accordingly, the dean's committee consulted Berea student profiles to construct admissions models that could predict applicant success. Our own analysis corroborated Adelman's suggestion that a high school student's combined "academic resources" (i.e., GPA, class rank, ACT scores, college-preparatory curriculum) predicted persistence better than any of those variables alone and also better than any financial need characteristics. Adelman reports, "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." Separate analyses of each of the academic and admissions characteristics of our Berea students reached the same conclusion.

During the entire year and a half of deliberations over retention, our admissions staff experimented with its own improvements. George Dehne undertook an extensive market survey to determine our effectiveness in relaying Berea's unique mission elements (e.g., family income limit, "no-tuition" policy, labor requirements for every student, etc.) and learned that our message was often missed or misunderstood. Therefore, new admissions literature better articulated Berea's special story. Moreover, personal interviews with each admitted student helped us better understand subjective issues such as self-esteem and academic motivation. These two new measures complemented the unfolding analyses of recruitment data and the greater use of the "academic resource" measures.

Personal interviews with each admitted student helped us better understand subjective issues such as self-esteem and academic motivation.

Numerous academic initiatives improved the first-year core curriculum and pedagogy. Although it was never used systematically, an early-warning system allowed faculty to alert the dean's office and the associate provost of student problems. New summer orientation weekends with advising, curricular and residential life components were redesigned for first-year students and their families. A significant effort to improve advising included a required three-day summer workshop for advisers to freshmen. The workshop, for which faculty are compensated, extends beyond the usual content and expectations to discussion of behaviors (academic or otherwise) that affect student academic performance. Faculty and academic administrators largely credit this new advising program with Berea's retention success.

Students have participated in an aggressive renovation of the residence halls — both in their design and reconstruction. More than half of the large residence halls have been completed, and students are proud of their work. Likewise, faculty collaborated with student life to develop "guided learning" in residence halls and student life activities. This initiative responded to student frustrations with the college's rules and restrictions about their living arrangements. Tempering Berea's tendency — based on paternalism and geographical location — to limit student choice in these matters, guided learning allowed for greater student involvement in making rules and increasing flexibility in student accommodations over their four years. Guided learning in the residential setting reinforces the liberal arts goals articulated in the classroom. Students have been far more satisfied with their residential and co-curricular lives since the program began.

From 1996 to 2003, Berea's African-American population grew from 8 percent to 18 percent of total enrollment. Adding a second African-American admissions counselor, focusing recruitment on towns and cities within our region, and

collaborating with several black student organizations to hold a recruitment weekend (which included a Unity Banquet featuring black and white student leaders, side by side) — all helped to achieve this strategic increase. A recent survey showed that the recruitment weekend (named after Carter G. Woodson, a former Berea student and the father of Black History Week) strongly influenced potential students, especially those with family incomes under $25,000.

While the admissions office was increasing its recruiting initiatives, many other efforts also sought a larger African-American population. An expanded Black Cultural Center with a full-time director was one such initiative. The centerpiece of Berea's interracial strategy was recruiting black faculty, and the board of trustees increased its own black representation to 20 percent. Most interesting, however, has been Berea's Black Music Ensemble, renowned for its excellent gospel music, its integrated character and its support for students who are struggling personally or academically. The ensemble offers a transitional home for first-year African-American students who participate at more than a 50 percent rate. African-American students from families with incomes under $25,000 cited the Black Music Ensemble, Berea's counseling services, service-learning opportunities in the curriculum, and the labor program as significant factors in their satisfaction and retention at Berea College.

Perhaps the most striking new information we learned in preparation for this essay came from a Spring 2003 African-American Student Study. We knew that our retention rates for African-American students have been about the same as that of other students for more than 10 years. We were pleased to learn, however, that the actual retention and graduation rates for African-American students in all economic groups have actually improved, as we more than doubled the number of students in this cohort.

Retention rates for the period 1996 to 2002 for African-American and for all students by financial groupings reveal a surprising pattern, as the table below shows.

This single chart of seven years of retention data offers many conclusions. First, the retention results of the two years (1996-1997) before our retention and graduation study stand out from the five years (1998-2002) after recruiting changes and other initiatives described above, when retention jumped more than 10 percent. Second, in the most recent five years, African-American student retention was higher than student retention for other students — sometimes by a significant margin. Third, African-American students with family incomes less than $25,000 tend to be retained at a higher rate than those with higher family incomes. Finally, family income is not a very significant variable in retention of non-African-

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
African-American less than $25,000	64% n=25	67% n=18	90% n=29	85% n=34	93% n=28	91% n=43
African-American $25,000 or more	67% n=12	70% n=10	81% n=27	71% n=35	91% n=33	76% n=25
All less than $25,000	63% n=227	71% n=211	78% n=206	81% n=177	83% n=154	82% n=162
All $25,000 or more	70% n=154	72% n=190	80% n=206	74% n=246	82% n=265	79% n=260

American students, who constitute 82 percent of the student body after 1998, when the potential students' academic resources began to determine admission. Whether the same conclusion can be drawn for African-American students is not yet clear.

This analysis affirms our multiple efforts to attract and retain African-American students. Our Spring 2003 survey of African-American students confirms the wisdom of welcoming and supporting students across all areas of the college — from the admissions process and orientation sessions to academic advising and curricular content to student life and co-curricular opportunities. The complexity of retention and graduation issues requires thoughtful solutions that target all dimensions of campus life.

Finally, the 1997 and 1998 retention reports demonstrate that familiarity with the national literature on student learning, student progress and retention, and maintaining data on campus are prerequisites for the analyses that were only marginally possible in 1997 but that today fill reams of notebooks in Berea's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Our college-wide collection and use of this data have guided our strategic decisions.

Our fledgling research and assessment effort has been particularly important in retention and graduation issues. Our data allow us to track individual students' academic progress across many variables, and our longitudinal data (e.g., freshman and senior surveys) allow us to track the attitudinal and conceptual changes in individual Berea students over their four years at the college. Thus we can ask not only whether and why we are retaining our students but also how well we are accomplishing our educational aims. The more robust our institutional research capabilities became during the 1990s (a full-time director was appointed in 1994), the better positioned we have been to ask the complex questions associated with student retention.

Much of what the last seven years taught us about student progress at Berea cannot be reported here. However, this brief overview offers a few salient lessons. First, aligning admissions and retention/graduation efforts with mission is facilitated by a strategic planning process that seriously considers external influences on these critical processes. Learning from the national literature and from the experiences of other similar colleges is a research methodology at the heart of a teaching/learning institution. This new kind of "whole institution" thinking and planning process is taking root at Berea College.

Moreover, honest analysis of extensive and relevant data is critical for comparison with that national literature and for consideration of local concerns. At Berea, our commitment to students with economic need has sometimes provided an excuse for ignoring retention rates and national cohorts. Recently, however, such comparisons have been a source of pride as we have exceeded national predictions of our students' success. We no longer ask whether Berea faces retention or graduation problems but rather constantly try to enhance our already good rates.

A new kind of "whole institution" thinking and planning process is taking root at Berea College.

Prioritizing the new solutions to retention issues is also important, and institutional structures must implement them. Our choice for the Dean's Committee (now called the Provost's Committee) to monitor and implement admissions and retention strategies worked because leaders from the admissions, academic and student life collaborated toward integrated solutions.

It's also crucial that a college dares to be different in setting its goals and works persistently to achieve them. Eight years ago, few people would have speculated that we simultaneously

could double our African-American population of students *and* increase our overall retention of students — we just knew that both needed to happen.

Finally, none of the successes in admissions, retention and diversity at Berea College would have been possible without an enormous effort by faculty, administrators, staff, trustees and students. Perhaps the greatest lesson we have learned at Berea College is also the most obvious one — that addressing complex institutional conundrums requires marshaling and integrating numerous areas of a college's academic support, student life and administrative resources.

At Berea, the institution's capacity to engage in a strategic planning process that tries to create "an integrated and continuous learning community" is only the beginning. Our real strength is our campus-wide willingness to reach across office and departmental lines to collaborate on critical institutional challenges. Berea's retention and graduation success may be better acknowledged in our new collaborative and integrated processes than by the improvement of student retention and graduation rates alone. In effect, Berea's attempt to improve its student retention and graduation is really but one example of the college's own capacity for institutional renewal. It is such a capacity for "being and becoming" that supports both Berea's commitment to its core mission and its application in its constantly changing world.

Larry Shinn, president
Berea College

Heritage University: President as tour guide

"Welcome to a tour of Heritage University! Did you enjoy the scenic three-hour drive across Snoqualmie mountain pass from Seattle? I'll bet you thought you had lost your way the last half-hour, driving down a country road with apple orchards on one side, and 12-foot hop vines on the other side! Well, you found us — even if you were confused by driving along a road with ramshackle houses every few hundred yards. Those are mostly migrant housing or belong to former Mexican migrants who are now field managers for local ranchers. And some of those residences belong to members of the Yakama Nation, which has a 50 percent unemployment rate. Not your ordinary roadway to a liberal arts four-year college!

"But here you are — and let me introduce myself. I'm Kathleen Ross, the university's president. I'd like to walk you around the campus and show you what Heritage does to give traditionally under-represented students a successful college experience."

As you walk out of the 200-space parking lot, past the entrance sign, the

HeritageUniversity

Location: Toppenish, Wash.
President: Kathleen A. Ross, SNJM
Undergraduate enrollment: 1,300

Summary: Heritage University is one of the youngest four-year nonprofit colleges in the nation. In 1982 the closure of a 75-year-old liberal arts college (Fort Wright College of the Holy Names), which operated a branch on the Yakama Nation reservation in central Washington state, galvanized local Native American and county leadership. They incorporated a new, nonprofit, nondenominational entity and named it Heritage College, taking over the outreach program and then developing a full, four-year, degree-granting institution. It began with 85 students and, by 2003, had grown to 1,300. In August 2004, it officially changed its name to Heritage University.

president explains that you're headed for the graceful brick, glass and wood building looming straight ahead.

"I hope you like the expanse of green lawn and flowerbeds in front of the library — on the left, in the distance, the landscaping leads to our teaching greenhouse, used for the new horticulture management degree," the president explains. "All our degrees have grown out of regional needs, and this is the latest, with the crisis in traditional agricultural products, like apples, here in the Yakima Valley."

The president then motions toward two students standing just 50 feet away, in front of an imposing bronze sculpture near the entrance sign. "Meet Jason and José."[7] Jason, the one with the long black braid down his back, asks, "Do you like our eagle statue? We look at it every day when we come to college, because the eagle is very important to Indian people." Jose's hair is also jet black — but short and windblown. "Yeah. It's 12 feet high and weighs more than a ton! Awesome! We were real impressed when our board chair had it made for us. He says it should make us think of success when we arrive here from home every day. Everyone here expects us to succeed."[8]

The president asks Jason where he is headed. "To work on my internship project for the Sahaptin Language Preservation Project." Turning toward you, he adds, "Sahaptin — that's the basic language for the Yakama people, and lots of other Plateau tribes, too. I'm on my way to interview an elder who said she'll let us tape her with our new digital equipment. We're preserving samples of the Yakama language as part of the effort to develop a full Yakama dictionary. I want my kids to learn Yakama while it's easy — not have to struggle as an adult in the college Sahaptin classes the way I do." As he turns to leave, Jason adds, "Without this Sahaptin language paid internship, I wouldn't be in college. I have to feed my family while going to school. Besides, this project is related to the real world I live in and care about, and it's helping me do something I really want to do with my life. I never knew college could be like that." As Jason sprints across the lawn, the president explains, "Jason's internship is funded by a research grant. We've found that having meaningful research internships at good pay rates is a vital strategy for keeping low-resource students in school."

The president turns to José, who is still standing respectfully by the statue. "Are you doing an internship this term?" "Nope. Just finished one. But I can hardly wait for my next one. Me, I never worked anyplace except out in the fields before I came here. It was really different finding out what to do in an office setting. It was pretty exciting."

"What's your major, José?"

"Business. That's the only thing my grandfather would approve of when I wanted to go to college. And in my house, what my grandfather says is the law!" José goes into the parking lot, and the president adds, "Our admission counselors visit a lot of homes, many of them traditional Mexican or Native American, to convince the key family decision-maker — often a grandparent — to let a young person come to college."

Heritage's vision is that of a harmonious multicultural learning community.

Walking beyond the statue and down a walkway lined with flowers, you are soon at the entrance to the Library and Learning Resource Center. As you step inside, the president asks you to note the interior columns framing the central nave of the building, creating a sort of longhouse-cum-cathedral feeling. "Those are peeled white pine trees — seven down each side to represent the fourteen tribes and bands of the Yakama Nation," she explains. "It's one of the visual reminders we use to reinforce the university's vision of a harmonious multicultural learning community. We even devote half of the required Heritage Core class to cross-cultural communication — its skills and knowledge base. Since

everyone has to take the Heritage Core in their first term — whether as a freshman or a transfer — we get students thinking right away about how a Heritage education is going to help them learn to work effectively with the diverse cultures in this region and in the global society.[9] This helps them see the practical value of their education right from the start, and that's vital if you want to keep first-generation students persisting toward degrees. It also makes the university's motto — 'Knowledge Brings Us Together' — come alive for them."

[Our] mission is to provide quality, accessible higher education to multicultural populations.

Now that you are inside the building, the president moves toward the executive office suite tucked into the southwest corner. Just as she is about to open the door, three women burst through. They're in high spirits, judging from their conversation, a mix of Spanish and English. The president exclaims, "Oh. These must be students from the Presidential Fellows program," adding an aside to you. "It's a co-curricular program that combines leadership seminars and job-shadowing the president and other college officers when they travel off campus."

All three of the women nod affirmatively, and one student, who looks like a grandmother,[10] excuses herself "to meet a student I'm tutoring in the Academic English Bridge program." She disappears through a large doorway on the far left, labeled "Academic Skills Center."

The president looks expectantly to the two younger women. "I'd like you to meet our visitors, and I'd like you to tell them what you're up to!" The one named Alexandra explains. "Marta and I are going to our CAMP Ambassadors meeting. It stands for College Assistance for Migrants Program. Last year we were able to come to college under the program, and this year we get to help recruit 80 new students whose families are in farm work or agriculture. Almost all are first generation to college — like me and Marta, and about 75 percent of Heritage students. You need extra support when no one at home knows what it is like to go to college."

Marta picks up the story. "We're planning a workshop for new students — how to find scholarships and how to manage their money, how to plan their study time — stuff like that."

Alexandra adds, "You know what? 90 percent of Heritage students qualify for Pell Grants! So they've got to know how to fill out all those papers!" The president bids them goodbye and good luck and continues through the executive suite office door to her office. "Take a look at the college's mission and vision statements in the Heritage 2002-2004 catalog." She points to the open book on her conference table.

> [Our] mission is to provide quality, accessible higher education to multicultural populations which have been educationally isolated. Within its liberal arts curriculum, Heritage University offers strong professional and career-oriented programs designed to enrich the quality of life for students and their communities.
>
> From its founding days, Heritage has been inspired by a vision of education which embraces issues of national and international significance. These issues revolve around the realization that cooperation across cultural boundaries — whether they be geographic, ethnic, religious or economic — will be vital to human survival ...
>
> To translate this vision into everyday reality in the Heritage learning community requires a highly qualified and unusually dedicated faculty and staff, with a low student-faculty ratio ... The college community attempts to

> live its motto, "Knowledge Brings Us Together," by placing great importance on the dignity and potential of each student and by considering diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds as assets to the educational process.
>
> Heritage has a student body with substantial diversity, which creates an effective learning community where no single cultural group is a majority ... Cultural pluralism creates a climate of respect and appreciation by fostering "learning about us" in an interdependent and connected world. Heritage acts to make its curriculum, staffing, teaching and other college activities reflect this learning.

After she's let you read this, she comments that "all the key points in those mission and vision statements are principles that we have found are necessary to serve low-income, first-generation students."

She then shares some statistics, "so you can get a feel for our student body."

"You know, 60 percent of our students come from families with incomes less than $25,000. The location of the college is also very important," she adds. "We are in a central location for a service area of about 250,000 people. We're situated in between population concentrations of various ethnicities, so everyone feels we're 'pretty close by.' Whenever we ask students why they chose Heritage, 'location' is one of their top answers. For those who take up to nine or 10 years to finish, you can see why they need to live near the institution that serves them. And for students battling poverty, being near the extended family and opportunities for temporary local work can make the difference in being able to feed your kids or your brothers and sisters.

"Time to continue the tour," the president announces. "Let's visit the Student Services Center — it just opened last year." As you approach the Student Services Center, the president points out the subtle geometric designs in the brickwork on this building as well as on the library building. "They're from local Indian basket designs, so Indian community members feel welcome. But they are subtle enough that other ethnic groups don't feel excluded. You'd find the same approach in the floor tiling of the cafeteria, if we had time to visit. Use of design and decoration can make the entire campus a welcoming place that responds to students' backgrounds."

As you enter the Student Services Center, you meet the dean of admissions and outreach, who shows you its "one-stop shop" layout. "Everything from recruitment to registration and financial aid, from counseling and career planning to student billing and work-study placement, can be found here," he says. "We had students saying they drove up several times before they got the courage to walk around campus to the various offices. So we put this building right by the parking lot and put all these services in one place. When we bring students on campus for visits — and that's the most effective part of our recruitment strategy — they always seem relieved to see financial aid and registration right here, easy to access from where they park."

Whenever we ask students why they chose Heritage, "location" is one of their top answers.

As you follow the president and dean through the building, it is evident that much of the staff is either Native American or Hispanic. The dean comments, "Being a native speaker of Spanish myself, with a migrant family background, I can relate to students and encourage them. It's important, too, that we have some key staff members from the Indian community. Students see that people who look like them fit in here."

The president adds, "That goes for having staff who understand firsthand some of the cultural issues that low-income students face, too. You

need staff who understand the barriers that poverty puts in your way."[11]

As we move past the office for the director of student resources, who manages the scholarship application process, the president explains Heritage's funding strategy for scholarships. "We established a process about 12 years ago for donors to begin an endowed scholarship that would yield a minimum $500 scholarship annually. The donation required is only $10,000; that has encouraged a lot of people to begin scholarships. As of 2002, we have about 85 such scholarships. Some of the funds are now $50,000 or more because of additional donations, so the scholarships are larger."

> You need staff who understand the barriers that poverty puts in your way.

The director of student resources elaborates. "We also actively seek out other scholarships from outside donors each year, like local service clubs. And I have work-study students who comb the Internet and printed directories for outside scholarships that students might be eligible for. Then we figure out which students might be strong candidates, and we bring them to the office and encourage them through the application process. This produces a number of extra outside scholarships each year."

Two young women working nearby in the career planning and placement office interrupt the scholarship discussion. The president identifies Lupita and Janet as work-study students. Janet explains, "We each have kids. I have one, and Lupita has two. Both of us are under 30, and we were on welfare until the welfare office told us that we couldn't continue at college more than one year and still get family assistance. But we knew if we didn't finish a degree — I'm going to be an accountant, and Lupita is getting her bachelor's in social work — we'd never be able to earn a decent living for our kids. So now we're on our own — just squeezing by right now — we even use the college's emergency food bank over in that cupboard sometimes."

Lupita adds enthusiastically, "There's also a 'professional clothes' closet around the corner. It was a life-saver for my first internship. Now, my kids even study with me around the kitchen table. They keep telling me, 'Mom, don't give up!' Of course I can't, because I have to give them a good example!" The dean of admissions adds that about a third of the students are parents. "Heritage provides lots of unconventional support to these students, and it really pays off."

The president now leads you through the rest of the building's circular floor plan, and you head back to your car. She sends you off with a promise to "mail you the summary analysis of how we help low-income students across the institution. Have a good trip back — and come again!"

The analysis

A tour of the Heritage University campus exposes the many factors that assure success for our low-income and first-generation students. Let's turn now to a more structured analysis of these key factors in Heritage students' success.

The Heritage student body is highly skewed toward factors traditionally associated with failure to complete a four-year liberal arts degree. Of all students nationally who began a postsecondary program in 1989, only 6 percent of those from the lowest socioeconomic quartile had received a bachelor's degree by 1996, whereas 41 percent of those from the highest quartile had earned a four-year degree. During this same period, only 18 percent of Hispanic students earned a bachelor's degree, whereas 27 percent of non-Hispanic whites did.[12] All but about 10 percent of Heritage undergraduates are either low-income or from ethnically underrepresented groups, yet Heritage students graduate at rates significantly higher than the national trends would predict.

Offsetting these handicaps and facilitating learning and success are Heritage University's

major institutional commitments. In fact, these special efforts are the reason Heritage exists.

The following catalog of these efforts is organized into the four of the five categories used by the National Survey of Student Engagement,[13] which is documenting effective educational practices at undergraduate institutions across the nation. Our fifth category comprises our recruitment efforts to attract underrepresented students.

1. **Heritage supports active and collaborative learning.**

   - The Academic Skills Center provides good study space about 65 hours a week. Located at the heart of the campus, next to the library, it offers space for individual or group study and free computer and printer use. These "luxuries" are often missing in the overcrowded homes of low-income students.

   - Free tutoring in any subject is available in the Academic Skills Center, staffed by upper-level students, faculty (for whom tutoring is included in the contractual load) and qualified community volunteers.

   - Peer-tutoring groups provide the support that first-generation students may lack at home. Students, tutoring staff or student life and academic skills staff develop these groups. Some focus on subject areas, others on life concerns such as parenting.

2. **Heritage provides enriching educational experiences.**

   - Computerized career exploration and planning software programs are available free of charge, and the Heritage Core — our general education program — requires students to use them.

   - The university's work-study program prepares students for careers and paid internships. All work-study positions offer job descriptions and require a job interview.

   - Internships in outside agencies — such as science labs, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and schools — are required in 90 percent of the academic programs.

   - The Heritage Core course, required of all incoming students, includes a component in which students work in a cross-cultural team to design and implement a community service project.

   - The Heritage University Board of Directors sponsors a mentoring program in which outstanding community leaders and business people share their experiences once a month for select students and then meet with them in smaller groups for lunch.

   - The Presidential Fellows program provides leadership training, followed by job shadowing of the president and college officers.

   - Student club activities involve families of students about six times a year. When families have been on campus and felt comfortable at the Fall Family Fair, the Halloween haunted house for kids, the family Thanksgiving dinner or other similar events, they often become more supportive and involved.

3. **Heritage provides a supportive campus environment, even though it is a commuter campus without college houses.**

   - All student club constitutions must provide that membership is open to any member of the student body — regardless of ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

- College Assistance for Migrants Program (CAMP) provides individual support for low-income students from agricultural families.

- A cross-trained team, informally called "the Quint," meets weekly to improve personalized, effective student services. Members are the registrar, dean of admissions and outreach, director of financial aid, director of student life/student resources and coordinator of work study and career services.

- For emergencies, the university operates an emergency loan fund. This resource saves many a student from dropping out by meeting such unexpected problems as major car repair, child medical needs such as eyeglasses, higher-than-expected heating bills, etc. These emergency loans must be repaid within the semester, and a second loan cannot be taken until the first one is repaid. The maximum amount is usually $150 per loan. Although the amount may seem small, experience has taught us that for very low-income students, this amount may determine whether a student can remain in school.

- The university provides training in intercultural communication skills four times a year at faculty-staff days, and an annual faculty-staff retreat.

- The student resources office runs a small emergency food bank, which is generally used during the winter and at the end of the month.

- To address personal and home issues that often impede the success of low-income students, the student resources director maintains contacts with various referral services (e.g., family crises, imminent evictions or electrical cut-offs, domestic violence).

- The university operates an educational child-care program. The on-campus facility operates from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. and accepts children from infancy through 12 years old (after school). This is particularly important for students who lack regular child care or whose child-care provider becomes suddenly unavailable.

- Two full-time counselors — at least one of whom has a master's degree in social work — serve individual and group needs because so many of the students' problems relate to "social safety net" issues. (Counselors trained in counseling psychology programs are often unable to cope with the stress of students' external or insoluble problems, such as unfair welfare systems, extreme poverty or immigration issues. MSW recipients tend to have learned personal coping skills with these frustrations and therefore last longer on the job.)

- The scholarship coordinator and her work study staff research external scholarships and tap appropriate students to apply, mentoring them through the completion of the application materials.

- A student may sign promissory notes for up to two-thirds of his or her tuition bill each term, with three or four payment dates spread over the term.

- The business office provides personalized budget planning, on request, for students unable to meet the college's stipulation that registration for a new term is barred if a student's outstanding balance is more than $500.

- Internship funds from several foundations underwrite internships for companies or organizations that cannot afford to pay students a good wage. Before this funding is made available, the university carefully screens opportunities to determine that the internship will provide excellent career preparation.

Companies are urged to contribute at least 5 percent of the wage.

- The university deliberately maintains a low-tuition, low-unfunded-aid model to avoid sticker shock reaction for first-generation students and their families. Our tuition, at about $8,000 in 2003-2004, is about the same price as the total of tuition, room, and board at the closest publicly funded university. Staying at home to attend Heritage saves most of the room and board cost; therefore, students see Heritage costs as roughly equivalent to moving to the closest public institution.

  The total institutional financial aid in the budget last year was about $400,000, or roughly 5 percent of gross tuition revenue. About 25 percent of this aid comes from endowed scholarship earnings, and the rest is raised through our annual scholarship dinner and through unrestricted gifts to the annual Heritage Fund drive. The cost of providing each baccalaureate degree is roughly $11,000. The shortfall of $3,000 per student is raised through gifts, grants, and an additional revenue stream created by a multi-site master's in education program taught to cost-effective cohorts of 25 to 30 students in underserved regions throughout the state.

4. **Heritage seeks to increase academic challenge and quality, which helps students recognize the significant value of college attendance. This helps to counterbalance the many influences that push them toward dropping out.**

   - "Come Study with Us" sessions are held in the academic skills center for all general education requirements.

   - The curriculum across disciplines uses inclusive teaching strategies. For example, humanities courses present the established tradition in a mode more accessible to nontraditional students. For instance, the world literature course studies *The Tempest* rather than another Shakespeare play because it involves aboriginal peoples.

   - Writing Across the Curriculum requires four writing-intensive courses in the student's major's upper division sequence *after* a student has completed English 101 and 102. Writing exercises are adapted to the program's career outcomes. For instance, education majors write proposals to school boards; accountants write management letters about the results of an audit; social work majors write case studies; and environmental science majors write resource-management plans.

   - Comprehensive assessment of English, math and reading skill levels is required at entrance for course placement and tutoring assignments. Remedial courses may be required, or one-credit intensive sessions in a specific skill (punctuation, essay structure, spelling, etc.) may be prescribed.

   - Because of the large number of students from Spanish-speaking homes, our Academic English Bridge program offers an 11-credit integrated reading-writing-speaking-listening course. Placement test results may require a student to start with this program.

   - Small classes (average size of 14) and personal contact with professors are important elements of student success.

   - The faculty's 1996 multi-pronged research project identified the "Key Characteristics of Highly Effective Heritage Faculty" and subsequently incorporated the eight characteristics and their indicators into the faculty-evaluation instrument and the regular faculty-development opportunities. These eight qualities are especially responsive to the

barriers commonly encountered by low-income and first-generation students.[14]

- All faculty are required to submit, halfway through each term, the names and academic status of all those who may be in danger of receiving a D or F grade. This information goes to the student life office, whose staff personally contacts each student to develop a plan for the student to complete the course successfully. This effort, begun eight years ago, has significantly reduced the number of students who drop classes late in the term.

- Student research with faculty is key to the science and computer science majors. Opportunities range from studies of water quality in domestic wells in local rural areas to work with USDA research stations on plant or insect research to involvement in University of Washington research in dental hygiene.

- A formal partnership with the state's flagship institution, the University of Washington, provides a small computer lab with direct access to UW servers and resources from Heritage. Several UW faculty mentor Heritage students who are planning to pursue graduate study at the university. UW research projects in Heritage's region (which is 160 miles from the university) allow our students to participate in internships and practical academic projects that motivate them.

5. **Heritage recruits students whom national standards would deem unlikely to attend.**

- The Heritage recruitment plan emphasizes not only visits to high schools but also participation in local community events. For example, Heritage opens information booths at Native American pow-wows and Mexican-American fiestas. We also participate in the Toppenish Fourth of July parade and the Yakima County Fair.

- Admissions counselors are familiar with the home cultures and languages of prospective students and are not afraid to visit homes of students to convince parents and grandparents that college is possible and desirable.[15]

- Feeder programs increase awareness and interest in Heritage during middle school through high school. The Heritage Gear-Up program reaches more than 1,000 middle schoolers each year. Our science majors run science clubs at community center after-school programs and several elementary schools, and a summer science camp provides follow-up. Heritage runs a high school equivalency program for dropouts who are engaged in agriculture. It prepares students for the GED exam and funnels 20 or more students into the college each year.

- Heritage leads a consortium of 16 schools, primary through high school, called EMPIRE (Exemplary Multicultural Practices in Rural Education). This program coaches and provides resources to schools so they can maintain a healthy learning environment for every child from every background. Students in these schools become aware of Heritage and the possibility of attending college.

Summary

We started with a tour of campus to convey the need for a pervasive culture of support and responsiveness to help low-income students enroll and succeed at college. The catalog of programs and approaches used at Heritage University provided a window on the specific tactics that we have found effective with low-income students. We are proud to report that for the latest cohort we have tracked (entered in 1996), 60 percent received degrees within six years (38 percent received bachelor's and 22 percent received associate's degrees and planned to transfer or return to Heritage at a later date), and 11 percent are still enrolled. All told, our persistence rate is 71 percent.

The national statistic is that only 14 percent of students from the lowest income quartile receive four-year degrees within six years.[16]

A whole constellation of policies, practices, attitudes and expectations of staff and students makes success for low-income students possible. Heritage University realizes its mission by creating an entire campus environment in which any barriers to college success — especially those caused by the low income or first-generation status — are addressed proactively and where students find appropriate support for any challenge. By embedding "student success" in the institutional culture and using it as a norm for evaluating the performance of faculty and staff, Heritage strives to uncover hidden talent and give all students wings to soar.

Kathleen A. Ross, president
Heritage University

College of Notre Dame of Maryland: Young and adult women

College of Notre Dame
OF MARYLAND

Location: Baltimore, Md.
President: Mary Pat Seurkamp
Affiliation: School Sisters of Notre Dame
Undergraduate enrollment: 3,178

Summary: The College of Notre Dame of Maryland offers no special programs for its low-income students, but its strong commitments to personalized advising and careful planning for all students encourage their success. An innovative Weekend College offers an option for working adults — many of them low-income — who might not have otherwise found time for a college education.

The College of Notre Dame of Maryland was founded more than a century ago with a mission then considered both remarkable and revolutionary: educating women. At a time when higher education was not readily available to women — when it was considered injurious to women's delicate health — the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSNDs) founded the college, acting upon a core value to serve girls and young women. Drawn to the plight of impoverished immigrants in the New World, the School Sisters came to America in 1847 from their native Germany. They founded schools to provide to the poorest and most overlooked inhabitants of the United States the education that would transform their positions and secure their futures in this new land. Growing out of its history as the first Catholic college in the United States to offer women the baccalaureate degree, the college's current mission reaffirms this mission — namely, to educate women as leaders who can transform the world.

Today, the School Sisters of Notre Dame continue their educational mission on campus. Of the 87 full- and half-time faculty, 15 are School Sisters; another 10 SSNDs serve in staff positions. This remarkably generous faculty and staff connect easily and often

with students, creating one of the most important factors of academic success for the low-income student — indeed, for every Notre Dame student: the personal relationship. The college's mission and relationships and its systems, policies and attitudes all combine to create a positive and powerful learning environment that excels in meeting the needs of low-income students.

Throughout the college's history, service to women has defined its role: first to traditional-age women, then to working adult women through its Weekend College and most recently to women seeking graduate education.[17] In the undergraduate program, students of color constitute more than 25 percent of the students and almost half of our low-income students. Students with an annual family income below $25,000 constitute approximately 15 percent of the student body. Despite the challenges facing low-income students, these students perform comparably to all other students, as measured by grade point averages and time to graduation.

To encourage low-income students' degree completion, the institution must know and become a partner with each student.

Much has been written about the challenges that low-income students face in progressing toward a degree and achieving high performance. Strategies most likely to improve their persistence go beyond strategies of access: providing sufficient financial aid or incorporating technology and distance delivery in the curriculum. Although they are important, strategies of access position students to enter — but not to complete — college.

Disadvantaged and underserved populations need success strategies as much as access strategies. The most effective strategies provide personal attention and support to the individual student. To encourage low-income students' degree completion, the institution must know and become a partner with each student. Colleges founded by religious women — institutions whose students often are the first in their families to attend college — have long demonstrated their ability to assist the underserved. It is not surprising that the best models of persistence drawn from independent, liberal arts colleges whose traditions are embedded in this personal relationship would be mirrored in colleges like Notre Dame. Such models enhance success for low-income students by offering programs and preparation before college, helping students establish personal goals, heightening attention to academic performance and increasing campus social interaction. Other factors associated with success, such as individualized faculty-student interaction, financial aid packaging, work and attendance patterns complete the institutional profile for access and success.

The College of Notre Dame operates two major undergraduate programs: the Women's College and the Weekend College. The Women's College, a traditional baccalaureate program established in 1895, continues today as a women's college with approximately 700 students, 90 percent of whom are enrolled full time. Half of these students live on campus; all pursue a liberal arts curriculum, even if they major in a professional area.

The Weekend College, founded in 1975, was established primarily to serve women unable to enroll in the traditional program because of work and family responsibilities. Today, the Weekend College enrolls 1,000 part-time students. Most are from 25 to 55 years old and come primarily from the Baltimore area, although students have commuted from Florida, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Pennsylvania and Arizona to complete their degrees. This academic division, offering 11 majors and four certificates, is grounded in the same liberal arts orientation as the traditional Women's College, and adult learning theory provides the direction for the program's structure and delivery.

We looked historically at both divisions over a seven-year period (1996-2002) to determine the extent to which the college serves low-income students.[18] We then analyzed the elements of the learning environment that seemed to contribute to the success of low-income students and supplemented this assessment with self-reports from eight low-income students whom we interviewed. Segments of these interviews are profiled in later sections, which describe the learning environment.

Low-income students in the Women's College have constituted, on average, 16 percent of the student body.[19] Their ethnicity reflects greater diversity than the rest of the student body, with students of color accounting for 40 percent to 45 percent of low-income students. They persist to graduation in four years at a rate comparable with — and sometimes better than — the entire student body. Similarly, their grade point averages compare to those of all students, and we could find no other statistical differences in performance. When the data are examined by race and ethnicity, students of color in the low-income group demonstrate patterns of persistence and achievement equal to or better than that of our low-income Caucasian students. The data pool is small — one must be cautious in drawing conclusions — but the similarity in achievement between low-income students of all ethnic backgrounds and students from all backgrounds is noteworthy.

Degree students in the Weekend College represent about 65 percent of the 1,000 students enrolled there. These are the only students in the Weekend College for whom the college has financial aid information, so they were the group we examined to determine low-income status. Low-income students constitute about 14 percent of all Weekend College students. Their ethnic background is more diverse than their peers, as it is in the Women's College, with students of color — almost entirely African-Americans — representing nearly half of them. Although measuring persistence to graduation with part-time students is more difficult than with full-time students, an examination of student performance between 1996 and 2002 shows that low-income students persist to graduation at a rate comparable to or higher than that of the entire Weekend College cohort. Their academic performance as measured by cumulative GPA, as in the Women's College, compares to that of all other students.

These data indicate that low-income students at the College of Notre Dame not only have an opportunity for a challenging education but also earn baccalaureate degrees at the same rate as other students. Much of their success is undoubtedly attributable to their own intellectual abilities, motivation, determination and self-discipline. But it is also clear from our conversations that elements in the Notre Dame educational environment support them in achieving their goals.

Supporting students starts with their first contact with the college and continues through to graduation.

Supporting students starts with their first contact with the college and continues through to graduation. The college environment focuses on each student individually and couples challenges with support, a combination that seems effective with all students. No special programs serve low-income or other at-risk students; at the core of *all* college initiatives are strong personal relationships.

Students routinely identify particular personal relationships with faculty, staff and peers as significant to their success, as the profile that follows illustrates. In the interviews, low-income students also noted that clear expectations helped them focus on their goals. Transfer students in particular described their experiences at other colleges as less demanding and less academic.

Latisha burst into tears during her first visit to campus, when a Weekend College adviser said

she could enroll immediately and find the classes she needed to return to college. At age 28, she felt intimidated by her past failure to complete an education and did not want to repeat the mistakes that led her to drop out of college at age 20. She is now halfway through her degree in human services, having taken one course a semester since 1999. The first in her family to attend college, she can offer her own children, who are college-age, a different model. Latisha particularly cherishes the Weekend College's diverse students — younger or older, of varying backgrounds and ethnic groups — all with lessons learned from life experience, lessons she considers a common struggle. She has come to feel part of a team that offers great support and values the personal relationships and encouragement from faculty and staff. Initially overwhelmed, she found support in colleagues in the workplace and on campus. Like other Weekend College students, Latisha does not participate in activities beyond the classroom, but the wide variety of students and staff at the college supply a much-needed emotional component.

Latisha reports that professors in the Weekend College understand the many demands that compete for her time yet maintain high standards for student performance. Professors' accessibility by e-mail or phone is key, as are the Weekend College's convenient schedule and location. Latisha describes her favorite professor and academic adviser, a School Sister, as very encouraging, always providing positive feedback. Latisha focuses seriously on the career goals she knows her degree will offer and implores other would-be students in her situation, "Don't ponder it for years; take that first step! You think about it; you want it; just do it! It's hard, but it's worth it." She sums it up with a question, for which she has a ready answer: "Why wait? It will never be any easier than now. It will never be less expensive than now. There's no better time than now!"

Women's College students' initial contact with the college is usually from the admissions and financial aid offices, whose counselors offer individual attention to students' aspirations, concerns, personal circumstances, and especially their needs. Demystifying the often-unfamiliar admissions process or intricacies of financial aid is an important step for low-income families in particular. Accordingly, the staff offers helpful presentations and workshops on topics such as completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). One-on-one meetings with families focus on the FAFSA information, various funding sources (i.e., state, federal, college monies), loan and payment plan options, and comparisons of aid packages. Together, families and advisers develop a four-year plan to pay for a Notre Dame education with an emphasis on planning ahead — a critical need for families whose financial forecasts beyond the first year often remain cloudy. Plans point to a realistic route for attaining a bachelor's degree in four years.

Demystifying the often-unfamiliar admissions process or intricacies of financial aid is an important step.

Notre Dame's method for awarding institutional funds works to the advantage of low-income students. Sixty-five percent of these dollars are allocated to scholarships/awards and 35 percent to need-based grants. Low-income students qualify competitively for the merit awards given for academic achievement, talent and leadership. Their financial aid packages also comprise sizable federal and state funds. After awarding government and institutional merit funds, the financial aid office then meets any remaining need up to the maximum

award — sometimes as high as 75 percent of the tuition costs.

This story of a Notre Dame student underscores the pivotal role of the admissions and financial aid offices.

For **Kimberly**, a senior in the Women's College, independence from her family is a strong factor in her personal story. She comes from a very poor family who did not agree with her decision to attend college. In fact, her family and friends now accuse her of forgetting her "place" and trying to act better than the rest of them. Because her mother would not participate in the financial aid process, Kimberly declared herself financially independent in order to receive aid for college. She credits the financial aid office with helping her work through this process. In fact, when she thought she would be forced to quit college, the director of financial aid personally helped her find a solution; she was able to stay at Notre Dame. Kimberly now advises students considering college to look not only at the cost but also at the benefits of the degree.

The admissions process also provided Kimberly with an early and strong connection to the college. After attending the spring awards banquet for potential students, she felt connected to the caring environment of the college and has stayed in close contact with her admissions counselor. Subsequently, she was drawn to the small classes in the Women's College and the one-on-one interaction with professors. Kimberly believes that the lack of distractions and ability to stay focused at an all-female campus have been the key to her success. Kimberly is highly motivated to complete her degree in four years but worries about the day she will leave the college. It will be a challenge for her to trade the social supports she has found at the college and the easy access to staff and faculty for the new demands of the workplace. Kimberly believes, however, that her academic progress proves she will succeed.

Attention to financial circumstances continues throughout students' years at the college.

Attention to financial circumstances continues throughout students' years at the college. During each registration period, an assistant academic dean identifies students with outstanding balances and works with them to resolve their issues with the business and financial aid offices. All returning students are reminded throughout the process about institutional, federal and state deadlines and about required documents, as well as new opportunities for scholarships. With this kind of proactive response by the college, students better manage their financial lives.

Aid to part-time students is more limited, but the same attention to education and problem-solving is paid to them. The same financial aid counselors who serve the Women's College serve them.

Our analysis confirms the importance of ongoing connections between low-income students and the faculty and staff of Notre Dame. Nowhere are these connections more important than in the first-year student's immediate learning environment, whether in or outside the classroom. Focusing on this transitional year, the college has developed SMARTSTART to help new students develop the self-sufficiency of successful students. With special attention to the first weeks and months of the student's connection with the college, professors and advisers employ prevention and intervention strategies. A comprehensive approach bridging Academic Affairs and Student Development, SMARTSTART is an integrated introduction to college. It includes an intensive orientation program, focused academic advising, a first-year

experience with a cornerstone seminar, IDS 100: Perspectives in Education and Culture, a career action plan, and an emphasis on community-centered life. Relevant components of the SMARTSTART program (orientation, academic and career advising, other workshops) also are available to Weekend College students.

All new students are intentionally exposed to the mission, heritage and values of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland and to its founding religious congregation. For students in the Women's College, a daylong retreat before classes begin offers interactive sessions on the college's history, the role of the honor code and the value of diversity, to name only a few. They also meet people who will support them in their academic lives and learn a variety of ways to become involved in campus life.

Orientation for Weekend College is a half-day program that begins with an optional study skills workshop, followed by meetings with support services staff who encourage their success. They are introduced to counseling services, career services, the writing center and opportunities for short-term, study-abroad programs. They learn how to use Blackboard, an online teaching tool used in many classes. For both student groups, orientation is an important retention activity that offers practical information and connects them to campus culture.

Low-income students cite the advising process as key to their academic success. Each faculty adviser also teaches his or her advisees in the first-year seminar, IDS 100. The adviser helps the student design an academic program the summer before the first year and remains that student's adviser until he or she declares a major in the sophomore year. Advisers and the assistant academic dean assess student performance and capacity, consider issues and obstacles that may inhibit the student's achievement and development, help the student develop short-term and long-term plans, refer students to appropriate campus resources and celebrate successes.

Weekend College students also identify strong advising with their success. Advisers maintain an up-to-date credit audit on each student, which simplifies planning for future semesters. Students have access to course outlines in hard copy and on the college's Web site before they enroll. This feature helps students balance their other commitments with the requirements for each course, thus enabling them to make informed decisions — an integral part of the Weekend College's services. This is especially helpful for the low-income student, who often faces even more external demands on his or her time.

Low-income students cite the advising process as key to their academic success.

Kiyanna is a shy and soft-spoken sophomore who is majoring in communication arts in the Women's College. She glows as she recalls how a professor singled her out after a class in her major to tell her she had the potential to be a journalist. When her academic adviser said the same thing, she knew she had found her academic home. Her adviser recognized, she said, the many challenges that complicated her education but reassured her study of what she loved. Her adviser — through encouragement and criticism — taught her to approach her journalism work objectively. The product of an all-girl's high school, she liked the attention the college paid to helping women assume professional status. Kiyanna finds that Notre Dame's all-women environment is about more than just ensuring women's access to the same opportunities as men.

In addition, she credits her IDS 100 professor with encouraging her involvement on campus. She maintains an active profile because each activity better connects her to the college and thereby makes her more able to succeed

academically and personally. Now firmly established in the college's culture, her high level of involvement has taught her to prioritize many activities she enjoys with her class work and assignments. The college's small size and absence of distractions helped her find her academic niche.

Interviews with low-income students indicate that preparation, advice and counseling are important factors in choosing a career. Perhaps motivation results from familiarity with lower socioeconomic class or from worry about their student debts. Whatever the reason, they care strongly about future career success. For traditional-age students in the Women's College, exposure to career planning begins with orientation and the first-year seminar, where they complete a career interest inventory, visit the Career Center and participate in individual career counseling. Advisers encourage students to develop a personalized career action plan that links their liberal arts education to career choices. Working with their faculty advisers and career center staff, students identify their interests and abilities, focus on related majors and careers, explore opportunities for internships and other experiential learning, and begin preparing for work.

Advisers encourage students to develop a personalized career action plan.

Weekend College students receive similar guidance. Many already have careers; therefore, the introduction to career planning is much less prescriptive. Nonetheless, it is available for those who want it. At orientation, Weekend College students also are invited to develop a personalized plan, the Career Capsteps for Adult Learners. Their advisers help them develop portfolios that can present their expertise during job interviews, including internship experiences — an opportunity seldom available to part-time students.

Intervention strategies that lower the chance of academic failure are important for low-income students, who face many risk factors. The Student Success Committee, a group of faculty, student-development educators and students, identified day-to-day and structural issues that impede student success and established responses to these academic and personal challenges. Using the Noel-Levitz Retention Management System, the college identifies strengths and the risk factors for each student. Advisers then work with them to develop strategies that build on the strengths and counter the risks. Attendance patterns and midterm grades are reviewed carefully because they indicate which students may be performing poorly. Struggling students are expected to assume full responsibility for their academic success and to work closely with their advisers or the assistant academic dean to refocus their efforts.

Close contact is maintained with Weekend College students, particularly new students, throughout the year. Individual adviser meetings provide ongoing opportunities to develop study skills. In addition, Weekend College staff members call new students mid-semester to assess academic progress, to offer assistance if needed and to begin planning the next semester.

Co-curricular activities deepen the connections made in the classroom. Numerous and diverse opportunities — athletics, community service, campus ministry, student governance, drama, honor societies, academic clubs, music— enrich the academic program and enhance community life. A program particularly designed for new students, Healthy Choices, addresses topics such as personal safety, self-defense, test taking, study skills, learning styles, stress management, time management, selecting a major and money/credit management. All residents participate in community-building workshops in communication, diversity and conflict resolution. We prioritize engaging students fully in the life of the college

because it solidifies their connections with the college community and thus increases likelihood of graduation.

Debbie, a junior in the Women's College, enjoys an additional connection to the college: She is related to a Notre Dame employee. The close-knit community attracted her and defines her success at Notre Dame. Debbie's athletic participation since her first semester has provided a closer connection to the college. She has joined many groups and participates actively in extracurricular activities. The academic advising she received in her first year made her transition to college more successful than she had expected. Friendships from her first-year seminar have continued through her subsequent years; she also values friendships with professors. Not highly challenged as a high school student, she became engaged with subject matter addressing governmental policies for women. Debbie chose a women's college because a coeducational high school setting hindered her learning. Debbie says that an environment that puts women first has increased her sense of self and individualism. She is now interested in becoming a lawyer and focusing on women's issues.

The students in Weekend College forge connections with the Notre Dame community differently than traditional students do. Although Weekend College students take advantage of the Healthy Choices workshops and occasionally participate in athletics, theater and other activities, their busy lives for the most part rule out such participation. Weekend College students more typically form their connections through their strong relationships with classmates. They draw on each other's experiences, form study groups and support each other via e-mail.

Our interviews demonstrate the unique opportunities that a women's college offers low-income students. Each interviewee identified the "women's college experience" as an important part of her success. She described the experience as free of distractions, more focused on her own development and achievement than is possible in a coeducational setting, and filled with leadership opportunities she might not normally have pursued. Weekend College students identified campus diversity as an additional benefit. Most of the women we interviewed did not identify those benefits before they enrolled. Their actual experiences at the College of Notre Dame impressed upon them the power of this focused educational environment.

In interview after interview, low-income students attested to the increased confidence that the faculty and staff brought them. Individual attention, awareness of their competing priorities, personal relationships and sensitivity to individual learning styles all combined to create a supportive yet challenging learning environment. It is clear, however, that improvements in several areas will enhance this experience for others. For example:

The students in Weekend College forge connections.

- Education for admissions staff about low-income students' relationships with extended family members who might be more influential than the parents.
- Assertive strategies to connect students sooner with advising.
- More information sooner about student activities and organizations that will connect students to the college.
- Sharper, earlier focus on career choice and opportunities.
- More rewards for students who overcome the struggles low-income students face.
- Rewards for faculty and staff who go the extra mile to assist students struggling with

their academic, financial and personal challenges.

Inspired by the ministry and mission of the school sisters and by a common commitment to serving the underserved, the College of Notre Dame focuses on the academic success of low-income students. Whether in the Women's College with the traditional-age student or in the Weekend College with students over 25, institutional commitment combines with the student's individual determination. Access joins success in a learning environment that supports students who are ready to accept the challenge. In the words of one student who was asked what advice she would offer to other low-income students at Notre Dame: "Just tell them to do it. There truly is no better time than now."

Mary Pat Seurkamp, president
College of Notre Dame of Maryland

Note: Suzanne Shipley, Vice President for Academic Affairs, co-authored. Special thanks are extended to Cyndy Cowles, Dr. Jeanne Ortiz, and Dr. Sally Wall for their contributions to this essay.

Chart 1: Women's College

Entering class	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
# of first-year	161	156	153	137	165	116	152
# of transfers	35	41	39	40	43	41	50
Low income % of first-year	13%	15%	16%	12%	18%	13%	20%
% of transfers	17	15	28	10	23	15	8

Chart 2: Women's College 4-year graduation rate or persistence and academic achievement

	First-year cohort		Low-income group	
Year entered	Graduation rate	GPA	Graduation rate	GPA
1996	65%	3.25	62%	3.23
Caucasian	64	3.31	64	3.12
Students of color	68	3.19	60	3.35
1997	65	3.36	71	3.17
Caucasian	62	3.46	67	3.31
Students of color	70	3.22	75	3.05
1998	53	3.28	71	3.15
Caucasian	55	3.36	67	3.29
Students of color	46	3.12	78	2.95
1999	59	3.34	69	3.25
Caucasian	66	3.42	57	3.33
Students of color	48	3.08	78	3.19
Year entered	% still enrolled	GPA	% still enrolled	GPA
2000	54%	3.17	79%	2.87
Caucasian	54	3.21	77	2.74
Students of color	54	3.05	81	2.97
2001	60	3.14	80	2.86
Caucasian	62	3.12	71	3.25
Students of color	56	2.95	88	2.58
2002	84	3.01	87	2.71
Caucasian	85	3.10	79	3.11
Students of color	81	2.85	100	2.57

Chart 3: Weekend College enrollment

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Entering new students	133	111	104	88	72	60	67
% low-income	11%	7%	13%	10%	14%	22%	18%

Chart 4: Weekend College persistence and academic achievement

	Transfer cohort		Low-income group	
	% graduated or still enrolled in 2003	GPA	% graduated or still enrolled in 2003	GPA
1996	69%	3.48	77%	2.82
1997	71	3.47	75	3.47
1998	63	3.54	75	3.33
1999	72	3.37	67	3.10
2000	79	3.34	70	2.66
2001	75	3.24	83	2.72
2002	82	3.17	100	2.99

References

Balz, F.J., & Esten, M.R. (1998). Fufilling private dreams, serving public priorities: An analysis of TRIO students' success at inependent colleges and universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 67 (Issue 4), 333-345.

Brown, D.M., & Green, C.H. (2002). Making It: Stories of Persistence and Success. In Schier, T., & Russett, C. (Eds.), *Catholic Women's Colleges in America* (pp. 235-275). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Donlevy, J.G. (2000). College Success in a Technological Society: Increasing Access and Services for Economically Disadvantaged Students. *International Journal of Instructional Media, 27 (Issue 3)*, 225-230.

Gladieux, L.E., & Swail. W.S. (2000). Beyond access: Improving the Odds of College Success. *Phi Delta Kappan, 81*, 688-692.

O'Brien, C., & Shedd, J. (2001). Getting through College: Voices of Low-Income and Minority Students in New England. The New England Success Study (pp. 8-71). Washington, D.C.: The Institute for Higher Education Policy, Nellie Mae Foundation.

Mount St. Mary's College: Full range of services

Students from modest to indigent economic backgrounds face more than financial hardship. They are often from families whose primary language is one other than English. Their schooling often lacks the advantages available in higher socioeconomic neighborhoods. For instance, in Compton, Calif., only 37 percent of teachers are fully credentialed, in comparison to 92 percent in affluent Palos Verdes.[20] Not surprisingly, low-income students' parents often have limited formal education, even at the secondary level. Many are from single-parent households in which college-age children contribute financial support. This cluster of challenges means that colleges offering access to low-income students cannot assume these students are fully ready for college. Nonetheless, Mount St. Mary's has chosen to embrace this population as much as is fiscally possible. Our commitment to this aspect of our mission has been an evolving and transforming experience of mutual enrichment, extraordinary challenge and gratifying results. Serving low-income students, we have learned, has improved the college for all students.

Long recognized as a national model for embracing ethnic diversity, Mount

MOUNT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE

Location: Los Angeles, Calif.
President: Jacqueline Doud
Affiliation: Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Undergraduate enrollment: 2,127

Summary: Part of Mount St. Mary's ongoing success in educating low-income students is its investment in itself: It funds faculty- and staff-development programs and beautifies its campus. However, it also invests in its students and its community through its emphases on student support services, technological innovation, service learning and social values rooted in its Catholic mission.

St. Mary's College enrolls significant numbers of students from low-income families. In Fall 2002, 35 percent of the 291 freshmen in the college's traditional associate and baccalaureate programs came from families earning less than $25,000 a year. This statistic sharply contrasts with those of the nation's most selective colleges and universities, where only 3 percent of freshmen are from the bottom quarter of American families ranked by income.[21] Our statistic is especially notable because Los Angeles is the third most expensive urban area in the country. Moreover, the number of undergraduates at Mount St. Mary's College who come from the nation's poorest families increased 15 percent between 2000 and 2001. This figure outpaced our general enrollment growth of 2 percent over the same period. Forty-one percent of our baccalaureate freshmen are the first in their families to attend college.

As a Catholic institution, we embrace social values grounded in a faith tradition and foster a culture that calls us to educate students from all economic and social strata.

Why is Mount St. Mary's College committed to serving a population that places substantial demands on its faculty and staff and on its institutional budget? As a Catholic institution, we embrace social values grounded in a faith tradition and foster a culture that calls us to educate students from all economic and social strata. In keeping with the goals of our visionary founders, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, we strongly believe that every capable and motivated student, regardless of economic or social background, should have the opportunity to pursue a college education.

Although we are not neophytes in educating low-income students, we are far from complacent about our achievements. To keep us reflecting on this important task, we have placed all of our recent initiatives within the four goals of our current strategic plan: 1) raise the bar on student performance; 2) foster beauty in our environment; 3) become a culture of remarkable service, and 4) advance the effective uses of technology.

Convinced that raising the bar for student performance also implies raising the bar for our own performance, the college emphasizes faculty and staff development. Last year, Mount St. Mary's College benefited from the support of 37 foundations and corporations for in-service activities and projects that enabled faculty and staff to enhance both curricular and co-curricular learning. Having the financial resources to carry out projects, however, is only one aspect of faculty and staff development. The other is a faculty and staff with a thirst for self-improvement and a commitment to keeping student achievement at the center of their agenda. Because these personal qualities have guided our faculty- and staff-selection decisions, Mount St. Mary's continues to make remarkable progress with its student population.

We believe that a faculty that invests in its own development will recognize that the "how" of teaching is inseparable from what is taught. Historically, higher education placed little importance on pedagogy or learning theory for its own faculty. Most college professors have had a long love affair with content alone. To be sure, knowledge and its advancement are cherished deeply and valued appropriately at Mount St. Mary's, but we do not confuse teaching with telling. Mount St. Mary's College, mostly against the elitist grain, has long believed that methods matter. We have focused 25 years of research and experimentation on ways of thinking, knowing and molding an academic culture responsive to a primarily female and culturally diverse population.

This focus has also served us well in educating students with serious financial challenges. Our drive to enable each student to realize her potential has inspired us to learn more about learning.

Our long-standing distinguished programs and new projects both support our effort to enhance student performance and improve results. The backdrop for this emphasis is the college's cultivation of deep respect for each student and her potential. Identifying ways for students to surpass their initial vision of themselves — to believe in their ability and to work seriously toward it — is one of our most demanding tasks. Respecting them does not mean requiring less of them — a patronizing pitfall. Respecting students at Mount St. Mary's means requiring more, a standard that requires faculty and staff to demand even higher standards of themselves, to work hard and patiently and to reflect on their work with students in a faith-filled way.

One long-standing institutional initiative that contributes to the success of low-income, first-generation students is the Institute for Student Academic Enrichment (ISAE), now in its 15th year. Data from recent years show remarkable results in retention and graduation rates in comparison with the results for nonparticipating comparable students. Forty-one percent of the students in the ISAE have family incomes less than $25,000. Ninety-three percent of that group who entered the college in 1999 have graduated or are still enrolled. Seventy-nine percent of them are Latina. Students with similar academic and economic profiles who did not participate in ISAE have persisted at substantially lower rates; nonetheless, their rates are better than the national average.

In many respects, the Institute for Student Academic Enrichment is a model for the advising, tutoring, planning and cultural experiences we would hope to extend to every student. In a survey taken in the summer of 2003, 33 percent of ISAE students reported discussing politics for the first time in their lives; 43 percent said they now read news magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*; 59 percent have learned a new computer skill, and 60 percent went to an unassigned lecture.

Another innovative initiative of Mount St. Mary's is its two-year associate degree in the arts. It began as a terminal program for helping first-generation urban students find jobs, but now it encourages its graduates to transfer to the baccalaureate level. The students, nearly all of whom are minorities, complete the AA in two to three years. Most then move into baccalaureate programs.

The Institute for Student Academic Enrichment is a model for the advising, tutoring, planning and cultural experiences we would hope to extend to every student.

The Student Ambassador Program, established a dozen years ago, is one of Mount St. Mary's College's many community partnerships. Designed to motivate urban high school students to finish high school and go on to college, the Student Ambassador Program uses college students as inspiring role models, training them to convey practical information about campus life, financial aid and college applications to high school students. Ambassadors come from the same backgrounds as the younger students, who come from more than 30 Los Angeles high schools.

Faculty currently are developing ways to teach numeric literacy to students, a skill Mount St. Mary's considers critical for success in the 21st century. At no other time in history has numeric literacy so influenced daily life. Ordinary Americans every day face scientific concepts and statistical information on which they must base decisions about the political, religious, social and

personal dilemmas of modern life. The college believes that inadequate quantitative skills have kept many women from achieving their professional and personal potential. Accordingly, faculty help students overcome math anxiety and encourage them to meet their quantitative requirements early. Quantitative skills are being integrated into courses across the disciplines, and institutional standards have been developed to measure this important literacy. Thus, we already have documented student improvement.

Mount St. Mary's College welcomes a broad ethnic mix of students in its traditional associate and baccalaureate programs (53 percent Latina, 14 percent white, 16 percent Asian, 8 percent black, 4 percent mixed race and 5 percent unstated), and the faculty are attuned to sources of funding that will assist students. One faculty initiative resulted in the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC), a federally funded program very important to Mount St. Mary's. In 10 years MARC has enabled Mount St. Mary's minority students to reach an 80 percent acceptance rate to M.D., M.D./Ph.D. or Ph.D. programs. MARC students begin preparing for professional school in the first college semester. They undertake rigorous coursework, join faculty-student laboratory research groups and participate in science internships and research fellowships until they graduate.

The highly competitive Rockefeller Brothers Fund Fellowships for Students of Color Entering the Teaching Profession supports student graduate work. Promising candidates are identified early by the faculty and then go through a series of demanding internal and external interviews. Twenty Mount St. Mary's students have earned this important fellowship in the last 10 years. These impressive results, like the results with MARC, are attained because the faculty take the students seriously and form mentoring relationships with them.

All Mount St. Mary's students engage in service-learning projects throughout Los Angeles. Students in every discipline test their knowledge as they serve others — tutoring high school students, providing child care, and offering counsel to battered women. They assist — and learn from — the ill, the aged and the lonely in hospitals, homes and at the assisted-living center of the Sisters of St. Joseph, where they learn the history of the college from the women who made it. Through campus ministry, they feed, visit, listen to and pray with the homeless. On a recent senior survey, an overwhelming majority identified service as an important part of their years at Mount St. Mary's. Thirty-two courses now offer service-learning components. Service learning, we believe, fosters deep thinking about what knowledge demands of students, an outcome as important as the benefits students offer others.

Students in every discipline test their knowledge as they serve others — tutoring high school students, providing child care, and offering counsel to battered women.

Because we believe that beauty is essential to education, the college engages the student's imagination through the arts and sciences and encourages them to witness the inherent wholeness and goodness of people and things. We do this on two beautiful and treasured campuses. Our rituals and celebrations elevate the senses and the intellect. We believe that beauty is not a frill but a need of the human spirit. Sensitivity to beauty is worth igniting in every student, especially in those whose lives have been preoccupied with survival.

We do little in any realm of the college that does not touch on some aspect of service. We believe that, to serve students, we must serve one another. Therefore our ongoing faculty and staff development helps prepare ourselves to perform at

the peak of our potential — whether in teaching, advising or offering other support to students. To be on the staff of Mount St. Mary's College is to be approachable, available, proficient, respectful, attentive and collaborative. The satisfaction of serving students and each other lifts the college's spirit and generates energy and creativity. Without this spirit, many low-income students would fall by the wayside; with it, they persist and succeed at levels far higher than the national norm.

Low-income students at Mount St. Mary's have also benefited from the dramatic progress in the use of technology at the college, including smart classrooms, universal access to computers, computer training and integration of technology and instruction. In a survey administered in Spring 2003, nearly 400 students in courses that incorporate technology were asked about the impacts of the course. At least 75 percent of them reported that the technology encouraged them to interact with their peers and their instructor, helped them understand the ideas and concepts in the course, encouraged discussion about course topics and helped them think critically about the material.

As with any advancement in society, technology is also subject to abuse, so we emphasize ethical and courteous uses of these powerful tools. The goal is to model for students technology that enhances rather than diminishes communication; our policies reflect this aspiration.

The mission of Mount St. Mary's promises a dynamic learning experience and a superior education for all students. Educating large numbers of students traditionally at risk — first-generation, employed, low-income, from underrepresented populations — inspires everyone at the college. In the words of a college trustee: "We are making a difference where too few have been willing to try."

Jacqueline Doud, president
Mount St. Mary's College

Note: With warmest thanks to Lucille Villegas, Assistant to the President, and Michele Lewis, Director of Learning Assistance/ISAE who assisted in the preparation of this report.

Southern Vermont College: College of opportunity

The essence of Southern Vermont College is defined by the first sentence of our mission statement: "At Southern Vermont College, our philosophy begins with a deep belief in the potential of every individual." This theme underscores the passionate commitment to the institution and its students by faculty, staff, alumni and trustees. Banners with this sentence line the driveway to the college, reminding us every day that we are an institution of opportunity that fosters student growth — both academic and personal. Fundamental to the students' success are the opportunity and connection inherent in the delivery of our programs and services for a diverse student body, including a large proportion of students who are considered low-income.

Location: Bennington, Vt.
President: Barbara Pickard Sirvis
Undergraduate enrollment: 500

Summary: Emphasizing individual attention for each student, Southern Vermont College has created a student-centered environment that attracts and retains a heterogeneous student body remarkable for the geographic area, even without specifically tailoring its program to low-income students. However, not every initiative achieves equal success.

Why do students come to Southern Vermont College — and why do they remain? We prepare them for their future roles as solid citizens in the workforce. A career-oriented, liberal arts college with a commitment to a student-centered environment since its establishment in 1926, Southern Vermont College offers 20 associate and baccalaureate majors. The largest enrollments are in nursing, criminal justice,

psychology and business. The college recruits a diverse student body that will benefit from a range of instructional and support programs. Especially for rural Vermont, the student population of approximately 500 is diverse by any definition: socioeconomic status, ethnicity, politics, sexual orientation, race, religion or geography. Consider the following statistics:

- More than 50 percent of students are first-generation attendees.
- More than 25 percent are adults returning to college after time in the workforce or military or after starting a family.
- 12 percent have one or more learning disabilities.
- 14 percent are students of color.
- Twenty-seven states and six foreign countries, including Eastern European countries, are represented.

Considered a "college of opportunity," the message is clear to applicants that we seek students who want to do well regardless of their financial circumstances. The college mission pledges to serve all students and commits us to "provide institutional aid to support the unmet financial need of students who are motivated to achieve their academic goals and who accept responsibility for their continued, satisfactory academic progress." More than 75 percent of students have considerable financial need and receive some form of financial aid. Twenty percent of traditional students and nearly half of nontraditional students — a third of the total population — have family incomes less than $25,000. Using the federal criterion — family income less than 150 percent of the poverty level — more than half of the total population is low-income. Sixty percent receive institutional aid through the Southern Vermont College Opportunity Grant Program, which averages $5,300 annually per student. (Tuition, room, and board are about $18,000.) With a limited number of named scholarships, the college directs 32 percent of its tuition revenue to institutional aid. This task is not easy with an endowment less than $1 million.

With regard to low-income students:

- More than 70 percent are first-generation attendees.
- More than 60 percent of returning adults are low-income.
- Slightly more women than men attend.
- 70 percent of the students of color are low-income.
- Slightly more low-income students are on academic probation in comparison to the general student population.
- Fewer students with disabilities are in this group.

More than 75 percent of students have considerable financial need and receive some form of financial aid.

The college's heterogeneity is remarkable in Vermont and is a direct result of opening its doors to students regardless of their income or their ethnicity.

Southern Vermont College offers a variety of resources to enhance the success of all students. Although they are not intended expressly for low-income students, these include:

- A faculty with an extraordinary commitment to students.
- Peer tutoring, available day and evening.
- Academic support services for students. with identified learning disabilities.
- A writing center with professional staff and peer tutors.

Faculty also are available to students well beyond the required six office hours each week.

An average class size of 17 and a student-faculty ratio of 11:1 enhance the student-focused environment. Virtually all curricula include an internship or practicum, and a growing number of classes offer students a problem-based or service-learning opportunity. Community service, whether voluntary or for credit, is important to low-income students, who are often drawn to such opportunities. Thanks to the service orientation of the student body, the college has developed a reputation for its giving to the greater Bennington community.

Central to the college's academic support services is the ACTion (Academics-Counseling-Tutoring) Program, a Title IV program more than 20 years old. ACTion focuses on low-income and first-generation students with identified learning disabilities or other educational disadvantages. Federal funding exceeds $200,000 annually. With a 40 percent match from the college, ACTion supports two full-time and one part-time academic support staff; peer tutors; composition and math instructors for students who need two semesters to master the content; and staff in career services, community action and counseling. Faculty refer students to ACTion, and communication between students and ACTion staff continues after each contact. Peer tutors are available during the day and four nights each week in the library and in a seminar room near the residence halls. Two full-time staff work with students who have identified learning disabilities and occasionally with students who have serious learning skill deficits. They offer tutoring, study skill assistance and test-taking space for students who need quiet or extra time. Longitudinal data demonstrate the positive impact of ACTion. Data from 2001-2002 are typical (see the chart below).

Although the programs and services of the college appear to influence recruiting and retention of low-income students, the quantitative data provide only one perspective. We wanted a qualitative perspective as well. Therefore, a group of faculty and staff who work closely with the students met to discuss their perceptions of the key factors, and three student focus groups and several student interviews explored experiences at Southern Vermont. Review of the comments revealed two themes: connection and opportunity. Although these themes appear in many programs at the college, they seem particularly relevant to the success of low-income students.

Faculty and staff identified several campus characteristics that help establish a connection with students, beginning with individual attention. Students do not get lost in the small, caring atmosphere of the college. In their high schools, which tended to be considerably larger, they were overlooked, and their severely limited financial resources kept them from actively participating in high school life. Life at Southern Vermont is different. Academic difficulties at the college are

Criterion	ACTion participants	General student population
Retention	73.1 percent	68.7 percent
Graduation	41.2 percent	38.6 percent
Academic probation	18.1 percent	12.1 percent
Graduate school admission	25.5 percent	35.5 percent
Associate degree enrolled for baccalaureate	27.3 percent	26.7 percent

identified early, and faculty and staff work as a team to address student performance problems. One student noted, "I liked ... the class size and structure and the 'open-door policy.' " Another commented that she liked "how family-oriented it is and how willing students are to help each other." When asked why she stayed at the college, a student responded: "The people — they are now part of my family, and I have bonded with them." One student's experience is particularly illuminating:

> **Eddie** arrived at the college more concerned about his identified learning disability than his ethnicity. He immersed himself in his studies as a way to avoid social interaction that may also have revealed his sexual orientation. With support and encouragement, he realized that he was liked and accepted for who he was without judgment regarding his economic need. He became a student leader and a resident assistant, and he eventually performed a self-choreographed modern dance in a talent program. He now is a leader in the college-sponsored Upward Bound Summer Program and is a role model for future low-income college students.

The campus culture does not differentiate students by financial need. Students blend with peers regardless of socioeconomic circumstances. One staff member noted that the only place one notes a difference in the parking lot; affluent students drive nicer cars. A low-income student commented that he "met really cool people. Students aren't caught up in image stuff. We interact with each other regardless of our class differences."

The campus culture does not differentiate students by financial need. Students blend with peers regardless of socioeconomic circumstances.

Students connect easily with the college and regional communities. Federal work-study positions recognize students for their important contributions; they are not regarded simply as free labor to perform menial tasks. On campus, work-study students work with staff in admissions, the business office, public relations and student affairs. In these positions, they see themselves as "helping the college" while watching the staff work hard and enjoy it. The mission also involves connecting students to the community early in their college experience for several reasons:

- Because students remain when they feel connected to the community on and off campus.
- Because then they focus on their skills and strengths.
- Because then they are part of the Southern Vermont College team that builds strong relationships with the community.

Under the auspices of the Office of Community Action (established in 2000), teams participate in the Race for the Homeless or the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Bowl for Kids' Sake, which deeply connect students to the college. On-campus activities also provide opportunities for strengthening connections among students and with staff. On Campus Clean-up Day, students, faculty, staff and alumni work together to improve the campus environment. At sports events, students are likely to see staff among the fans cheering for their team. Faculty and staff often eat in the dining hall or snack bar, where they interact informally with students. The Missed Meal Plan allows students on the meal plan to eat in the snack bar, creating another opportunity for them to interact with their peers.

Students in the focus groups and interviews also identified the opportunities that affected their recruitment and retention. Overall, they described

an environment in which students, regardless of financial circumstances, can thrive, where they find opportunities unavailable to them in their more class-conscious high schools. At the college, leadership opportunities abound. The small student body makes belonging to a club, creating a new club or becoming a student government leader less threatening, thanks to the support and encouragement they receive.

NCAA Division III athletics provides another opportunity. Those who might be lost on a large college campus or who cannot afford the athletic equipment can join any team at Southern Vermont College. Moreover, the coaches work closely with support staff so students who need academic support get it. One illuminating example follows:

> **Jan** came to us with a 2.7 high school GPA, from the bottom third of her high school class, and with a 1,050 SAT; there was a clear "disconnect." Her references described her aptitude and some challenging situations that may have affected her high school performance. A shy student, she became a resident assistant, a student leader and captain of her athletic team. Although she was of traditional college age, family circumstances dictated that she finance her own education. She received significant financial aid from the college and graduated cum laude in 2001 with a degree in human services. She now teaches at a local private school for teenagers with significant emotional and behavioral problems.

The college's commitment to help every student meet his or her potential by addressing his or her unique academic needs draws low-income students to Southern Vermont College, where they may choose an existing major or develop an individualized major. Many low-income students enroll in criminal justice, human services, and business or create individualized majors like Psychology/English. Students feel empowered when they can make choices that allow them to meet their career goals. One student commented that she chose Southern Vermont College because another institution that she considered "only had a 52 percent success rate placing its graduates." Southern Vermont's placement rate, including entrance to graduate school, exceeds 90 percent within six months.

Faculty and staff report that their commitment to students responds to the institutional mission that places individual students at the center of the college. Like their peers, low-income students at Southern Vermont are drawn by this palpable priority, and it keeps them here. Students seek a college community that supports their goals. One student noted that the faculty "do not fail the students, do not make me feel stupid, and are . . . welcoming." Other faculty characteristics that students often praise include straightforwardness, praise for good work, flexibility, understanding, support, reassurance and belief in students.

Students feel empowered when they can make choices that allow them to meet their career goals.

These faculty characteristics are expected at Southern Vermont and thus are considered in the faculty review process, which the 2003 revision of promotion guidelines reaffirmed. Each syllabus must specify office hours beyond the norm for most institutions, clear objectives and assignments, and academic support opportunities. Faculty members who do not demonstrate these traits can improve, but if they continue to be unsuccessful, they are not rehired. Because the college does not offer tenure to faculty, enforcing these standards at Southern Vermont is a little easier than it is at traditional institutions.

Some strategies for improvement have not worked at Southern Vermont. Programming for the

first year was offered two different ways, neither of which was particularly successful. One was a credit-bearing course taught by a faculty-staff team. Although the teams worked together to develop the content — designed to help low-income, first-generation students whose prior schooling was inadequate — students did not respond. Another unsuccessful model involved peer-mentoring group meetings as well as organized activities and outings during the first six weeks of the semester. However, it lacked adequate incentives for participants, even though the outings were free of charge. Students said they preferred informal activities and networking as ways to learn about college and how to adjust to its demands.

Low-income students who participated in focus groups were asked about their greatest disappointments at Southern Vermont College. Comments were typical for college students, regardless of economic level: They complained about the enforcement of rules in the residence halls, and they wanted a swimming pool! Overall, students reinforced faculty and staff perceptions that much is going well at Southern Vermont. We are currently working with town leaders to develop more activities for young adults in the area.

What have we learned? The qualitative and quantitative data provide evidence and reassurance that most of the academic programming and support services offered to all students are particularly relevant to low-income students. Faculty, staff and students agree that recruitment and retention are enhanced through the following:

- Genuine, individualized approaches to students that reinforce their belief that they belong in college.
- Career-oriented majors with options for individualization and good prospects for employment after graduation.
- Financial aid that meets most of the unmet need.
- Co-curricular opportunities for student growth and development.

Clearly, these strategies work partly because Southern Vermont is a small college. It is easier to develop individualized approaches responsive to low-income students when the total population is only 500 students. However, more important than size is the fundamental commitment to the college mission and to students, especially low-income and first-generation students. A deep appreciation of the important role of a college of opportunity is essential. Most of our faculty and staff have backgrounds similar to those of the students. Salaries are not highly competitive, so income level is not what draws and retains our outstanding faculty, administration, and staff. They come and they remain because they are enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with our particular mix of students. Students come and remain because the entire college community comes to them each day with open minds and the willingness to learn from experience. The programs and support services work for all Southern Vermont students, including low-income students, because no one is considered different. The mission embraces every student as a unique individual, so all students are on equal footing.

Most of the academic programming and support services offered to all students are particularly relevant to low-income students.

The spirit of Southern Vermont College is best epitomized in statements made by two individuals. One is a recent alumna who came as a low-income student and graduated summa cum laude. She now oversees the service learning and community

service programs. She said, "I came here because SVC met my financial need, and I was given the opportunity to go to college — something I never thought would happen." The second comes from a currently enrolled low-income student who participated in a focus group: "They gave me a chance. Now I am going to show them what I can do." Now he's back for his second year, joining the increasing number of low-income students who graduate from Southern Vermont College, "where our philosophy begins with a deep belief in the potential of every individual."

Barbara Pickard Sirvis, president
Southern Vermont College

Note: The author acknowledges with great appreciation the assistance of Julie M. Krawczyk, '02, Director of Community Action, who conducted the focus groups and was a helpful critic of early drafts. Thanks go also to John Case, Director, ACTion Program, for data development, and Melissa Smith, Director of Public Relations, for editing suggestions.

International comparisons

Several of CIC's international members are deeply involved in the education of low-income students and are achieving great success in their efforts. The circumstances in Honduras, where the Universidad Jose Cecilio Del Valle is located; in Bulgaria, where the American University in Bulgaria is located; and in Costa Rica, a main base of operations of Universidad Interamerica de Costa Rica y Panama, are markedly different from those in the United States, but comparing them is thought-provoking and instructive.

Costa Rica

The following comments are those of William J. Salom, president of Universidad Internacional de Costa Rica y Panama:

Universidad Interamericana has adopted as a central part of its mission and its admissions policy the active recruiting of students from low-income backgrounds. The practical means by which the university has pursued this strategy in Costa Rica is related to the economics of education in this nation and how access to its higher education system — renowned for quality and relatively low cost — has been systematically denied to a large part of those students who most urgently need the opportunities that this system represents.

Specifically, the university has, since 1998, offered at its Costa Rican campus two innovative programs of financing to students who need help in covering the cost of their degrees. These programs are:

- Fondo Interamericano Educredito (Interamerican Edu-Credit Fund): A self-supported financing system operated by the institution. The system provides low-interest loans — lower than any other national financing program — to cover tuition costs. Nearly 30 percent of students at the university's Costa Rica campus participate in this program.

- **Plan Nacional de Becas** (National Scholarship Plan): Scholarships covering

50 percent of the cost of the undergraduate program, available only to graduates of the public education system — a distinction that, in effect, guarantees that the recipients come from the lowest-income backgrounds. Forty hours of on-campus work per term is required of recipients, or elective courses may be taken to fulfill the work require ment. Currently, this program serves approximately 10 percent of the university's Costa Rica campus population.

The key to understanding how the university has facilitated higher education access to low-income students is an understanding of how the uneven distribution of wealth in Costa Rica is reflected in secondary- and university-level education, both public and private.

Helping needy students can also be good business for a private institution.

While the public university system offers high-quality education at a very low cost, lack of capacity has forced strict admissions policies that focus almost exclusively on the results of standardized tests. High performance on these standardized tests has been linked in Costa Rica, just as in other countries, to a complicated web of social and structural factors that tend to give the advantage to higher-income students and punish those at the lowest economic levels, often students in the public system. Additionally, given the current condition of Costa Rica's public primary and secondary systems — available to all, but in danger due to a scarcity of resources — public high school students are less likely to graduate than their private school counterparts. The logical result of these factors is that lower-income, public high school students tend to have more limited access to public higher education.

Meanwhile, the private university system in Costa Rica has responded to the need for alternative opportunities in higher education, with dramatic growth in enrollment and variety of programs. Unfortunately, low-income student access to this system is limited by economic factors and general lack of financing alternatives. Additionally, the lowest-cost options among private institutions are often lower in quality and prestige. Consequently, they offer less-than-ideal conditions for both learning and post-graduation job placement.

Universidad Interamericana has facilitated access for low-income students with both Educredito and Plan Nacional de Becas in an environment where both scarcity of information and traditional class divisions force a creative but simple strategy of identifying needy students.

Educredito has also forced changes in stereotypes of lower-income students while show-ing that helping needy students can also be good business for a private institution. This financing program boasts a rate of overdue and bad loans that would be the envy of any bank — less than 3 percent of the loans are overdue or written off.

Bulgaria

Whereas Costa Rica has been reasonably stable in its political and economic circumstances, Bulgaria is a rapidly changing country. The transformation of most of its civil institutions to a post-USSR world has created another kind of problem of access to and success in higher education for low-income students. The following comments are those of Julia Watkins, president until recently of the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG):

The American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) was founded in 1991, shortly after the disintegration of the USSR, with the mission of educating a new generation of leadership for the poorest region of Europe. Begun as a joint project of the United States, Bulgaria, the University of Maine, the municipal authorities of a provincial capital

(Blagoevgrad) and the Soros Foundation, AUBG serves students drawn mainly from its host country. Because of the still-emergent state of the Bulgarian economy, the overwhelming majority of these students are economically impoverished.

While two-thirds of the current student body at AUBG is Bulgarian, virtually all of the final third comes from equally impoverished countries with economies just beginning to emerge from the communist era: Romania, Macedonia, Albania, Moldova, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Kosovo), Georgia, Ukraine and Mongolia. A handful of students come from developed or wealthy countries.

What sets AUBG's Eastern European students dramatically apart from most low-income students in the United States is that they tend to be enormously talented (SAT taken in a second language with scores often exceeding 1,300 and TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] scores averaging 650), ambitious, highly motivated and eager to participate in building open, democratic governments in their region. Nor is academic preparation a problem at this point in the development of these countries.

This education is not, however, easily accomplished, and herein lies AUBG's substantial experience with developing practices to confront learning obstacles that block the way for even highly motivated and very bright low-income students.

Two areas are particularly relevant to the national American experience. I believe that some of these activities could provoke especially valuable exchanges of ideas with independent institutions in the United States:

1) **Induction into the American tertiary education environment**
   a) Just as many American low-income students have a social adjustment to make (we don't like to call it a "class adjustment," but that is perhaps what it is), so AUBG students have to adjust to ethnic and national diversity. Bulgarian society tends to be fairly uniform in religion, language and cultural make-up, with relatively few minority populations. (Roma are the most significant and experience the strongest discrimination.) AUBG strongly emphasizes diversity programs, so that Kosovars and Serbians, Romanians and Bulgarians, students from Sofia and from the countryside can study and live together both at AUBG and in their future lives.

   b) The Eastern Europe secondary educational system produces a student focused on rote learning and its regurgitation, so the transition to an education which values critical thinking and active interaction between teachers and students requires constant tending and student support staff to guide this transition successfully.

2) **Financial aid**
   As in the American system, it is not always easy to tell which students are poor and which are rather wealthier than they might appear on paper. That problem is multiplied in an environment in which individual financial information is not readily available even to tax authorities. AUBG is continuously developing easy methods for determining its students' actual ability to pay. The difficulties here, however, highlight universal problems with the equitable administration of financial aid.

Honduras

The Universidad Jose Cecilio del Valle (UJCV) in Honduras takes another approach. President Irma Acosta de Fortin writes that the 2001 population of Honduras, 6.8 million people, is 56 percent rural. The population with easy access to a university education, either public or private, is only 92,000 and is concentrated in three major

cities, less than 1.5 percent of the national population.

Thirteen higher education institutions (five state-owned and the rest private) serve this population. The private universities serve 15 percent of the higher education enrollment. Acosta de Fortin's comments continue below:

The fundamental mission is to provide the labor market with innovative professionals capable of lifelong learning. The university has two campuses, one in Tegucigalpa, the capital, and the other in Comayagua, a neighboring city. By November 2002 we had 1,036 graduates, and there are currently 1,012 students enrolled for the first quarter of 2003.

The UJCV assists 6 percent to 10 percent of its students with scholarships, given largely to low-income students whose family income falls in the third quintile of the lower income distribution and who maintain a high academic standing. Furthermore, it awards financial aid up to 30 percent of tuition to those students who maintain a GPA of 3.0 or above.

Epilogue: Fertile ground

We return to one of the original impulses for this exploratory volume: What can private colleges and universities offer to the significant national agenda of educating low-income students?

These essays suggest that some basic characteristics of liberal arts institutions are critical to this success. Several essays echo Southern Vermont College's emphasis on individual attention with students in a caring environment. Indeed, in reading these essays, one is struck by the almost matter-of-fact assumption that faculty members and other staff will devote attention to individual students — that what may well appear to others as fundamentally important in helping these students succeed can be seen as merely routine for these presidents. The Cedar Crest College essay includes the observation that students from low-income families do not differ in significant ways from the typical student. Accordingly, low-income students achieved impressive graduation rates without special programs, although all Cedar Crest students receive an extraordinary package of advising and mentoring assistance.

Institutional attributes

Indeed, many independent colleges and universities constitute fertile soil in which low-income students can grow both dreams and skills. Key attributes of the schools featured in this volume incude the following:

- **Mission.** The most salient distinction is that a powerful sense of institutional purpose known as "mission" drives these institutions. This is not captured by workaday phrases such as teaching "basic skills" or "core competencies," as important as those concepts are to all students. Rather, at these institutions, the faculty teach whole individuals, not merely future members of the workforce. The institutional mission calls every member of the community to quicken the passion for excellence in students, especially in those

whose prior schooling had nothing to do with excellence, and then to inspire them to direct that passion in socially responsible ways.

- **Community connections.** These 15 institutions have become confluent with the communities that feed them. They form relationships with schools, community-based organizations, and their students' families — relationships that eventually inform the pedagogy, the curriculum and the co-curriculum. All colleges ally with the local community, but what is striking about this group is the reciprocity that emerges — the college is nourished as much by the community as the community is by the college. Reciprocity shapes the programs offered to the community, thereby distinguishing them from other, seemingly similar programs. Moreover, these colleges benefit from the reciprocity as much as the communities do. For example, St. Edward's University has used knowledge derived from its College Assistance to Migrants Program to improve support services for the entire student body, and CAMP's more personalized educational experience is now available to all students. Merrimack College's Accept the Challenge program for inner-city students from Lawrence not only enriches the college with social and cultural diversity but also encourages steadfast commitment to the Merrimack Valley even as its reach extends beyond the region.

- **Students as individuals.** Every college in the country identifies itself as a place where students are names, not numbers. But these institutions go beyond saying so. They acquaint themselves so thoroughly with their students that learning becomes truly individualized. Without extensive knowledge of a student's distinctive circumstances, even well-intentioned colleges can do little more than insist that they treat students as individuals. The success enjoyed by these institutions in educating students from the bottom socioeconomic quintile is directly proportional to the knowledge they develop about each one. If a college does not really know the student, how can the student know that the school believes in him or her? Nothing makes a student more willing to excel than becoming convinced that "this college really believes in me." Nowhere is this acceptance more evident than at Wilson College, where single mothers are embraced along with their children.

Nothing makes a student more willing to excel than becoming convinced that "this college really believes in me."

- **Student involvement in shaping the learning**. These colleges have created opportunities for students to become involved in their own learning. Hampshire, for instance, requires all students to design their entire course of study, so it was only natural to make that expectation the centerpiece of the James Baldwin Scholars program in Springfield. Alaska Pacific University's Rural Alaska Native Adults program involves students in their own learning through reliance on Internet-based curricula and conferences with the faculty. Cedar Crest has had notable success moving women into careers in science by

involving them not only in their own scientific research but also in the scientific projects of their younger peers. Although most colleges contend that they also involve students in their learning, only some do it as boldly and wholeheartedly as these 15 colleges do, especially with students from difficult circumstances. The more familiar approach is to use the more confining practices of remediation with this population, not the practices more commonly used with honors students.

- **Practicality.** Beyond the idealism of mission-driven expectations, community connections and student-centered learning, these colleges exhibit tough-mindedness in financing, in strategic planning, in improving campus facilities and in evaluating themselves — qualities that make their lofty aspirations work at ground level. Dillard University and the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, for example, devote great care to helping each family develop a practical plan for financing the student's education. At Heritage University, donors can set up an endowed scholarship with a gift of $10,000 — far less than the amount required by other colleges — an innovation that has dramatically increased the number of scholarships as more individuals hear about and want to advance the institution's remarkable work with Native Americans.

- **Planned improvement.** The Berea College profile could be used in a workshop on strategic planning for new college presidents, not only because the results of planning have been impressive — increasing the percentage of African-American students and the graduation rate — but also because its experience illuminates the importance of local and national longitudinal data to the planning process. College after college in this volume has prioritized planning, a more demanding and more collaborative emphasis than documentation might suggest. They have learned that one of the most important by-products of strategic planning is challenging the assumptions of the planners themselves through the galvanizing injunctions of comparative statistics.

- **Physical campus**. A more concrete catalyst used to promote success in these 15 colleges is the physical development of the campus, an important component in Claflin University's remarkable renaissance since the mid-1990s. In less than a decade, thanks to the most aggressive fund-raising campaign in its long history, Claflin has constructed a splendid Living and Learning Center, air-conditioned the student residences, won awards for historic restoration, and renovated several other buildings — explicit accomplishments that mirror Claflin's internal advancements in academic quality and reputation with impressive exterior improvements.

- **Institutional self-assessment.** All colleges step back regularly to assess their work, but we have been surprised by these particular colleges' intense self-scrutiny. Nowhere is the reluctance to declare premature success more evident than at Arcadia University. Although 90 percent of its students from Leeds Middle School in Philadelphia have graduated from high school — whereas only 44 percent of other Leeds students have done so — and although virtually all of them have gone on to higher education, the fact that their graduation rate from Arcadia is still below that of their classmates vexes that institution. This troublesome discrepancy is driving program modifications to improve that statistic, even though the rate at which former Leeds

students are currently graduating from Arcadia is substantially higher than the national average for similar students.

- **Liberal education.** In their determination to foster personal, academic and professional excellence in all students — but particularly in students from modest and sometimes troubled circumstances — and in their conviction that the loftiest educational aspirations are also the most practical, these colleges, like their counterparts around the country, play an essential role in advancing the aims of liberal education.

Yes, these are success stories ... So?

This project began with a conviction that independent colleges and universities had more to contribute to the discussion and practice of educating low-income students than many policy analysts and researchers have acknowledged. It also began with a curiosity: If that conviction seemed warranted, how so? These essays offer promise (though not proof) of that conviction and fascinating glimpses (though not blueprints) of the rich and complex educational processes of these often-overlooked institutions.

These essays raise several points for consideration. For governmental policy-makers and foundations, this volume highlights a category of colleges — high-minded, mission-driven, often unsung. The country can depend on these institutions to outperform the depressing student access and success statistics reported in *Access Denied* and the other reports cited in the introduction to this volume. Could these numbers be increased through policies and financial infusions that reinforce the work of these colleges and universities?

For college presidents, trustees and faculty members, the essays offer, by example, suggestions for improvement. By finding inspiration in the practices described, could other institutions imitate these successes?

Our answer to both questions is a resounding "Yes."

Richard Ekman, president
Council of Independent Colleges

Russell Garth, executive vice president
Council of Independent Colleges

John F. Noonan, president emeritus
Bloomfield College

Endnotes

[1] This is an income level that encompasses approximately the lower third of the family income distribution in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey*, 2001).

[2] *Twelve Facts that May Surprise You about America's Private Colleges and Universities*, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, 2003.

[3] Arcadia University (formerly Beaver College) changed its name in June 2001. Although much of the activity reported in this essay was done when the institution was named Beaver, the Arcadia designation is used throughout to avoid confusion.

[4] The student body at Leeds Middle School is 99 percent African-American.

[5] Source: Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA).

[6] Throughout this essay I will use "retention rate" to refer to the freshman-to-sophomore retention of students and "graduation rate" to refer to a five-year graduation rate. Any exceptions will be noted.

[7] All persons introduced during this "tour" are real Heritage University people, but names have been changed.

[8] The bronze sculpture, "They Shall Mount on Wings As Eagles" is the work of Seattle artist Ed Weber, conceived and donated by James L. Smith. It was cast at Joseph Bronze, Idaho, for the 20th anniversary of Heritage in 2002.

[9] Mirroring closely the population of the region, Heritage's student body is 45 percent Hispanic, 34 percent white, 18 percent Native American, 2 percent Asian-American and 1 percent African-American.

[10] Approximately 35 percent of Heritage's degree-seeking undergraduates are right out of high school. Another 40 percent are between the ages

of 22 and 30. The remaining 25 percent range from 31 to 60 years old.

[11] See "Myths and Realities in Minority Education: Touchstones for Decision-Making" by Kathleen A. Ross in *Crucial Agenda: Making Colleges & Universities Work Better for Minority Students*. Boulder, Colorado: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1989, pp. 7-25. See especially pp. 15-17 and 19-21 on socioeconomic factors that affect low-income students.

[12] *Descriptive Summary of 1989-90 Beginning Postsecondary Students: 5 Years Later*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996, 34, Table 1.3.

[13] NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) is supported by Lumina Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Pew Charitable Trust Forum on Undergraduate Learning and Wabash College's Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts.

[14] "Key Characteristics of Highly Effective Heritage Faculty " is available as a monograph for $10 prepaid from the President's Office at Heritage University, 3240 Fort Road, Toppenish, WA 98948.

[15] A favorite story relayed by one recruiter was about convincing a Mexican immigrant grandfather to let his grandson attend college. The issue hinged on financial aid. Grandpa was incredulous that "the U.S. government would pay thousands of dollars for *my* grandson to go to school. It must be a trick, and in the end he will owe a whole lot of money." Many discussions later, the Spanish-speaking recruiter finally won the grandfather over. He explained, "The main interest of the U.S. government is collecting taxes. But they can't collect taxes unless a person makes money, and the more money he makes, the more the government can collect. So, the government pays for students to go to college, because they will make more money and then pay more taxes." The grandfather thought that was eminently logical and let his grandson register.

[16] "Postsecondary participation of Students from Low Income Families" by Thomas G. Mortenson. Oskaloosa, IA: Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY, 2000, p. 15. This statistic reports four-year degrees earned by age 24, which we interpret as comparable to attending six years of college.

[17] Although the Weekend and Graduate divisions serve women and men, 85 percent to 90 percent of the students are women.

[18] The number of low-income students ($25,000 of total income as reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA]) in these two programs could only be identified if a student had completed a financial aid application. It is quite possible — particularly with part-time students, because fewer of these students explore financial aid options — that we may not have identified all of the students who would have qualified as low-income. As a result, the statistics about our students may be considered conservative estimates.

[19] Student responses on the CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) survey in which the college has participated on a regular basis corroborate these statistics. From 1998 to 2001, 18 percent of first-year students self-identified as from families with incomes of $25,000 or below.

[20] *A Tale of Two Cities: Bridging the Gap Between Promise and Peril*. Los Angeles: United Way Research Services.

[21] Savage, David (2003, April 6). Ranks of Poor Are Thin at Top Colleges. *Los Angeles Times*, p. A34.

Also available from Lumina Foundation for Education

Fifty Years of College Choice: Social, Political and Institutional Influences on the Decision-making Process
Jillian Kinzie, Megan Palmer, John Hayek, Don Hossler, Stacy A. Jacob and Heather Cummings
September 2004

When Saving Means Losing: Weighing the Benefits of College-savings Plans
Roberto M. Ifill and Michael S. McPherson
July 2004

Expanding College Access: The Impact of State Finance Strategies
Edward P. St. John, Choong-Geun Chung, Glenda D. Musoba, Ada B. Simmons, Ontario S. Wooden and Jesse P. Mendez
February 2004

Unintended Consequences of Tuition Discounting
Jerry Sheehan Davis
May 2003

Following the Mobile Student; Can We Develop the Capacity for a Comprehensive Database to Assess Student Progression?
Peter T. Ewell, Paula R. Schild and Karen Paulson
April 2003

Meeting the Access Challenge: Indiana's Twenty-first Century Scholars Program
Edward P. St. John, Glenda D. Musoba, Ada B. Simmons and Choong-Geun Chung
August 2002

Unequal Opportunity: Disparities in College Access Among the 50 States
Samuel M. Kipp III, Derek V. Price and Jill K. Wohlford
January 2002

Hope Works: Student use of Education Tax Credits
Barbara A. Hoblitzell and Tiffany L. Smith
November 2001

Learning in the Fast Lane: Adult Learners' Persistence and Success in Accelerated College Programs
Raymond J. Wlodkowski, Jennifer E. Mauldin and Sandra W. Gahn
August 2001

Debts and Decisions: Student Loans and Their Relationship to Graduate School and Career Choice
Donald E. Heller
June 2001

Funding the "Infostructure:" A Guide to Financing Technology Infrastructure in Higher Education
Jane V. Wellman and Ronald A. Phipps
April 2001

Discounting Toward Disaster: Tuition Discounting, College Finances, and Enrollments of Low-Income Undergraduates
Kenneth E. Redd
December 2000

College Affordability: Overlooked Long-Term Trends and Recent 50-State Patterns
Jerry Sheehan Davis
November 2000

HBCU Graduates: Employment, Earnings and Success After College
Kenneth E. Redd
August 2000

Student Debt Levels Continue to Rise
Stafford Indebtedness: 1999 Update
Patricia M. Scherschel
June 2000

Presidential Essays: Success Stories — Strategies that Make a Difference at Thirteen Independent Colleges and Universities
Allen P. Splete, Editor
March 2000

Are College Students Satisfied? A National Analysis of Changing Expectations
Lana Low
February 2000

Fifty Years of Innovations in Undergraduate Education: Change and Stasis in the Pursuit of Quality
Gary H. Quehl, William H. Bergquist and Joseph L. Subbiondo
October 1999

Cost, Price and Public Policy: Peering into the Higher Education Black Box
William L. Stringer, Alisa F. Cunningham, with Jamie P. Merisotis, Jane V. Wellman and Colleen T. O'Brien
August 1999

Student Indebtedness: Are Borrowers Pushing the Limits?
Patricia M. Scherschel
November 1998

It's All Relative: The Role of Parents in College Financing and Enrollment
William L. Stringer, Alisa F. Cunningham, Colleen T. O'Brien and Jamie P. Merisotis
October 1998

NEW AGENDA SERIES™

Lumina Foundation for Education, a private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Through research, grants for innovative programs and communication initiatives, Lumina Foundation addresses issues surrounding financial access and educational retention and degree or certificate attainment — particularly among underserved student groups, including adult learners.

Focusing on these areas, the Foundation frames issues and explores new solutions through fact-based research. Because we strive to be a credible and objective source of information on issues affecting higher education, Lumina Foundation encourages original sponsored research. The results of that research, and therefore the content of this and other Lumina Foundation® publications, do not necessarily represent the views of the Foundation or its employees.

Believing that published research may have the longest-term impact on higher education, the Foundation publishes and disseminates articles, research reports and books. We prefer topics and approaches that are more practical than theoretical, and which emphasize pragmatic tools that will assist institutions and public policy-makers.

Additional information about the Foundation's research and grant-making programs may be obtained from:

Leah Meyer Austin
Senior Vice President for Research and Programs
laustin@luminafoundation.org

Additional information about Lumina Foundation® programs and communications may be obtained from:

Susan O. Conner
Executive Vice President for Impact Strategy
sconner@luminafoundation.org

Lumina Foundation for Education
P. O. Box 1806
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1806
800-834-5756
www.luminafoundation.org

Lumina Foundation for Education
New Agenda Series™

Susan O. Conner
Executive Editor

David S. Powell
Director of Publications

Gloria Ackerson-Seats
Amy Schramm
Corinne Wohlford Taff
Editorial assistance

Natasha Swingley
Design and Production

Printed by SPG Graphics Inc.

Lumina Foundation for Education
New Agenda Series™ is published periodically by
Lumina Foundation for Education
P.O. Box 1806
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1806

First-class postage paid at Indianapolis, Ind.

Send all name and address changes to:
Lumina Foundation for Education
Attn: Database Manager
3813 E. Winston Street
Bloomington, IN 47401-4292
nswingley@luminafoundation.org

October 2004

Helping People Achieve Their Potential®

LUMINA®
FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION